United Nations

S/PV.6517

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6517th meeting

Wednesday, 20 April 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Osorio	(Colombia)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Vaz Patto
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Mashabane
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2011/239)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Chinese Language Day

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): As today is Chinese Language Day, I would like to convey my congratulations to the Chinese delegation.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2011/239)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I would like to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/239, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Atul Khare.

Mr. Khare (*spoke in Chinese*): Today is Chinese Language Day. I would like to begin by congratulating the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Chinese Mission to the United Nations, Mr. Wang Min, and to convey my best wishes to all Chinese-speaking people.

(*spoke in English*)

Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Sudan. The Council has before it the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2011/239) on the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), outlining the Mission's activities up until 1 April and recommendations for the extension of the UNMIS mandate, which will expire on 30 April.

I would like to start my remarks today by outlining the latest developments in the Sudan, followed by updates on the post-referendum negotiations and the status of the outstanding Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) provisions, before highlighting some of the key issues related to the planning for a follow-up United Nations mission in South Sudan.

During the reporting period, the successful completion of the Southern Sudan self-determination referendum was a momentous achievement. It is a testament to the commitment of the CPA parties to peace and to the courage of His Excellency President Al-Bashir and His Excellency First Vice-President Kiir. The CPA parties went to great lengths to ensure that the referendum progressed smoothly, peacefully and on time, and that its results clearly reflected the will of the Southern Sudanese people and were accepted by all.

The referendum also demonstrated how the peace and security work of the United Nations can be effective when supported by a unified and coordinated international community. The logistical and technical assistance of UNMIS and the financial support of the international partners were indispensable. Just as important was the political facilitation provided by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Menkerios and the tireless work of the staff throughout the United Nations in the Sudan.

Despite these achievements, several challenges lie ahead. Key CPA issues remain unresolved or incomplete, and if not addressed effectively could quickly undermine progress and threaten to pull the parties back into conflict.

Following the referendum, tensions in the South have risen. In particular, conflicts between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and a number of insurgents and militia resumed and posed a significant threat to civilians in the Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states.

The situation in Abyei remained volatile throughout the reporting period. The continued failure of the parties to make progress towards resolving Abyei's future status fuelled frustration and empowered hard-line elements within the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities and contributed to continued violence. There has, fortunately, been no significant upsurge in violence since early March, and the Kadugli agreements have contributed to containing the situation even though their full implementation remains a major challenge.

In all cases, the Mission responded through political facilitation and increased military presence. However, denial of access severely curtailed the ability of UNMIS to patrol conflict areas such as Abyei, Jonglei and Upper Nile and further deter threats against civilians.

The majority of UNMIS patrols took place across the Mission area unhindered by any deliberate restrictions to UNMIS freedom of movement. As I mentioned earlier, however, this was not the case in Abyei, Jonglei and Upper Nile, where this positive trend has been reversed. Out of a total of 221 patrols conducted in the Abyei area during the reporting period, at least 33 — or around 15 per cent — were denied, with a sizeable increase in March, when 21 cases — or 26 percent — of the 82 UNMIS patrols were denied access. More importantly, since January and despite persistent attempts, UNMIS patrols have never been able to gain access to the sites where the fighting took place, such as Makir Abior, Noong, Todach and Tajalei. In addition, UNMIS patrols have frequently been harassed, most recently in Diffra on 18 April, which has led to the non-attainment of original patrol goals. There were also overt displays of aggression towards UNMIS, for example in Goli, Diffra, Shegei and Um Khaer.

In March, due to SPLA operations against the armed militias in Upper Nile and Jonglei States, the SPLA requested that UNMIS remain out of the counties where the operation was occurring. This restriction was revoked by the SPLA in late March, but it severely hampered the ability of UNMIS to verify the military and humanitarian situation in these areas and of humanitarian actors to gain access to affected civilians. Since the lifting of the restrictions, UNMIS and the United Nations country team have been able to conduct verification and assessment missions to address the plight of the civilian population and security concerns.

To counter these restrictions, UNMIS engaged with both Governments and their military command. The issue was brought to the attention of the area joint military committees and the Ceasefire Joint Monitoring Commission, and also discussed within the Ceasefire Political Commission. In Abyei, the standing committee also discussed the problem, and it was decided that UNMIS should have unhindered access to the whole area. This has increased the Mission's mobility to some extent but restrictions remain a challenge.

We have been pleased with the cooperation between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), but remain concerned about the slow progress on outstanding CPA issues, such as border demarcation, Abyei, popular consultations, and the integration of SPLA North into the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and on the post-referendum negotiations.

The recent round of negotiations in Addis Ababa from 9 to 11 April concluded with an agreement on a joint approach to debt management ahead of the World Bank meeting last weekend, but a number of economic questions, such as the ownership of pipelines and transitional financial arrangements for oil-revenue sharing, remain to be resolved. Equally, some progress was made on the joint management of the border, such as the establishment of a joint command mechanism to ensure the implementation of the post-referendum security arrangements and the development of a joint paper on border security, but the parties still differ on the necessity of third party involvement.

In this context, we are very concerned about the lack of progress in finding a solution to the crisis in Abyei. While the SPLM insists on an agreement on the basis of the CPA Abyei Protocol and the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the NCP has stressed the importance of equal participation by the Misseriya in a referendum. Abyei remains a flashpoint that has the potential to further escalate and damage the relationship between the North and the South. In this regard, UNMIS has recorded a sizeable military build-up in the area on both sides. We are also concerned that, due to the continued obstruction of migration in the central corridor, migration-related conflict cannot be ruled out.

Due to these disagreements, there is a possibility that the residual CPA issues will not be solved or that the post-referendum negotiations will not be concluded by 9 July. The popular consultations in Blue Nile state are lagging behind and have not started in Southern Kordofan, pending the state elections. Furthermore, the physical demarcation of the border has not yet commenced, and the integration of the SPLA troops in the two areas has not been resolved, creating a potential security threat. It is our view that third party engagement will remain necessary to bring the CPA to a satisfactory conclusion and to further support the AU High-Level Implementation Panel in its efforts to negotiate a post-referendum package.

The popular consultations in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states are vital to the development of peaceful North-South relations and the North's own adjustment in the post-CPA period. It is of the utmost importance to ensure credible popular consultations in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states and that the parties commit themselves to mechanisms to implement their results beyond the CPA's interim period.

We are concerned about the security risks relating to the integration of the SPLA from Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states into the SAF, especially pending progress on the popular consultations process. These troops, located on the border with Unity and Upper Nile states, insist that their political grievances be adequately addressed in the popular consultations, and await their outcome and implementation before agreeing to any formal agreement on their integration.

Furthermore, the upcoming elections in Southern Kordofan, which are to commence on 2 May, are of importance to both parties, and the increase in violence is of great concern to us. The NCP-SPLM partnership has been a stabilizing factor over the past two years, but since this election will influence Southern Kordofan's political balance of power, the rhetoric of the election campaign has been increasingly aggressive. As a result, on 13 April, four predominantly Nuba villages within the locality of Al-Rashad, 200 kilometres north-east of Kadugli, were targeted by violence, resulting in the death of 19 persons, including three children, four women and 12 men, and the injury of 29, including three women.

Conflicts between the SPLA and insurgents pose a significant threat to civilians in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states. Several issues are at stake here: first, disgruntled high-level officers of the SPLA who do not see eye to eye with the SPLM leadership; secondly, Southern militia leaders — such as Murle and Shilluk — whose local grievances have not been addressed; and finally, Southerners who fought within the Sudanese Armed Forces but want to be integrated into the SPLA. The Government of Southern Sudan will need to take concrete measures to address ethnic tensions, mismanagement, political and social marginalization, economic development and governance, especially in rule of law institutions.

The integrated technical and operational planning team of the United Nations has completed its report, which is being considered at Headquarters now. As part of the planning process, there has been continual engagement through the Integrated Mission Task Force to ensure that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has full awareness of the needs and objectives of other departments, funds, agencies and programmes in the post-9 July period.

The outcome of this work has been the development of a broad mission concept, a concept for the military and police component, and an initial draft of a mission support concept. These concepts have informed a paper for the consideration by the Policy Committee chaired by the Secretary-General when it meets some time around 26 April. The Secretary-General's recommendations will then be outlined in a special report that will be issued for the Council's consideration in mid-May.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Khare for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also thank you for your ongoing coordination efforts during Colombia's membership of the Council.

We are all aware of the significance of today's deliberations, especially for the Sudan. In particular, the report of the Secretary-General before the Security Council (S/2011/239) is the penultimate report on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). The interim period will end in just over two months. This is the most decisive, crucial and sensitive period for the two parties to the CPA. During that time, they will have to redouble their efforts in order to reach political settlements on outstanding issues, so as to achieve the primary goal of the CPA, namely, the establishment of lasting peace and security in both the North and the South.

The report of the Secretary-General sheds light on numerous political developments during the reporting period. Chief among those is the completion of the referendum in a safe, fair and transparent manner, as has been communicated to the Council by Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, head of the United Nations panel tasked with monitoring the referendum. However, the referendum is not an end in itself. We have reached the point where we must conclude the implementation of the CPA, not just by resolving outstanding issues but also by initiating arrangements to enhance integration between the North and South following separation.

Our desire in the North to promote fraternal relations, in particular with the nascent State in the South, was illustrated by the historic statement delivered by our President during his visit to Juba prior to the referendum, as well as by his statement to the Cabinet at the time of the referendum's endorsement. Once again, I wish to stress here that the principles and guidelines declared by Sudan's President constitute both our platform and our approach to addressing post-referendum arrangements, including on the issues of citizenship, debt, assets, water, international instruments, security, economic arrangements, the demarcation of the border and the situation in Abyei — in spite of the thorny nature of those issues and the time they require. We have reiterated many times here in the Council that we would like — and are in fact eager — to provide assistance to the nascent State in the South, for we understand that security there also means security for the North.

In its section on Abyei, the report of the Secretary-General sheds light on many developments experienced in the region during the reporting period. Paragraph 17 refers to the 13 January Kadugli agreement between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka tribes, as well as to the 17 January agreement between the Ministers of the Interior of the two parties to the CPA. Those agreements provide for arrangements to find solutions to disputes. If the two parties adhere to them, those arrangements will bring about an end conflict. The agreements also provide for the deployment of two additional Joint Integrated Unit battalions, while withdrawing all Southern-affiliated police units. However, clashes flared up once again when Misseriya tribe members were prevented from taking their herds to water sources.

No one can argue that addressing security issues and concerns will ever substitute for a comprehensive political settlement on Abyei. As the Council is aware, the Government of the Sudan has continued to positively address the proposals on the situation and status of Abyei provided by the facilitators and mediators, as they represent members of the Council. Those include the framework proposals submitted by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, head of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. However, those proposals fell on deaf ears on the other side, which failed to respond positively and rejected them. In the light of the flexibility we in the North have shown, we call upon the Council today to resolve the question of Abyei. We propose that the other party should also take steps to demonstrate flexibility, in order to help the facilitators and mediators to address the problem. We would like to emphasize that we are prepared to show the necessary flexibility, taking into consideration the circumstances in the region, so as to reach a final solution to the Abyei issue.

We have followed up on the preparations for the legislative elections to be held in South Kordofan state. Those elections were among the requirements of the popular consultations provided for in the CPA. Preparations began with voter registration and the publication of candidate lists to carry out elections for the legislative council. I would like to emphasize that we in the North are committed to making progress and to continuing the preparations. I wish to reassure the Council that the elections will take place from 2 to 4 May, as scheduled. That will constitute a great stride towards completing the popular consultations. We will provide the Council with updates on developments in due course. I also wish to reassure the Council that both parties are participating in the popular consultations.

In his briefing, our friend Atul Khare referred to clashes in certain areas of Southern Kordofan. I wish to stress that those were the same kind of actions as take place in the context of competition between any two parties in preparations for elections anywhere in the world; they are not policies aimed at reigniting hostilities. They flared up, but were contained immediately.

Following elections for the Legislative Council in Southern Kordofan, we will initiate public consultations aimed at assessing public opinion in connection with the services provided by the State. This is an aspect that has already been achieved in Blue Nile State, which is a step ahead of Southern

Kordofan. Generally speaking, the popular consultations in both States are taking place in an objective manner; there are no major problems in this regard.

As noted in paragraph 42 of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/239), the SPLA presence in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States is an issue that should be discussed, investigated and addressed on the basis of the CPA — that is, those forces should be withdrawn. I wanted to provide the Council with details so that it would be aware of where the problem lies — that the SPLA has not yet withdrawn its elements from Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, which could have a negative impact on the popular consultations. We therefore call on the Council to send a strong message. We are not asking for condemnation, but for the Council to encourage the SPLA to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, specifically on this aspect.

I would recall that the Sudanese military made a commitment to all of the aspects of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement by withdrawing all of its units and the Joint Integrated Units from Southern Sudan. SPLA redeployment from the North remains at 37 per cent. According to the report of the Secretary-General, that aspect should be addressed by the Council, as these issues are intertwined.

Regarding security developments in Southern Sudan, the report before the Council and the briefing provided by Mr. Atul Khare paint a grim picture of the situation in Southern Sudan. It can be summed up as follows: there are too many insurgent units. I could describe them as an amoeba — a kind of creature that keeps growing and growing. Every day we hear of a new instance of an insurgent battalion defecting and taking up arms against the State. I personally drew attention to this issue one month ago, when Mr. Pagan Amun participated in the meeting of the Council. However, Mr. Amun did not like my statements. I believe that this is not the right approach to tackling these issues.

We welcome the role of the United Nations and of UNMIS. We pay tribute to them for the credible information they have presented in depicting the issues and shedding light on the problems beleaguering Southern Sudan. The goal is for that nascent State to be stable, secure and deserving of international support, especially in the area of development. It should prepare and transform itself from an elitist military organization into a State that is inclusive of all the political parties in Southern Sudan. The units in question should be integrated and reached out to, not excluded, for their exclusion would mean that the nascent State had failed before even seeing the light.

I am sharing this with the Council not as an opponent of the South but as a Sudanese citizen who is truly looking forward to the stability and security of both the North and the South. I therefore wish to paint a true picture of the situation and thereby help the Council to take the right decision.

Another aspect that shows that recently there have been tremendous problems related to the SPLA is the fact that they have prevented many elements from reaching the region. They have prevented UNMIS from carrying out its humanitarian work, let alone fulfilling its military mandate.

In closing, I wish to recall what I said earlier: that this is a mushrooming phenomenon. George Athor, the insurgent SPLA General, and many others have defected and separated from the SPLA.

Regarding the recommendations on the future of UNMIS, the Mission's mandate will expire before 9 July, the date that marks the end of the interim period. Therefore, we endorse the technical and temporary extension of the UNMIS mandate until 9 July, as proposed in paragraph 111 of the report.

We are determined to intensify our consultations with our brethren in the SPLA so as to resolve all outstanding issues, including the status of Abyei. What is needed at this stage is for the international community, in particular the Security Council, to build confidence between the two parties and to support their efforts to resolve those issues. We are filled with hope that our brethren in the SPLA will understand the requirements of the forthcoming period and the daunting challenges that we will face. In that way, together we will be able to present a civilized example of two neighbouring countries sharing many common denominators in terms of history and brotherhood.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6518

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6518th meeting

Wednesday, 20 April 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Osorio	(Colombia)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Portugal	Mr. Vaz Patto
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

11-30512 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2011/257, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has thus been adopted unanimously as resolution 1977 (2011).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Brazil's affirmative vote for resolution 1977 (2011) confirms our unequivocal commitment to the cause of a safer world in which weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — will no longer exist. The possibility that those weapons could fall into the hands of non-State actors, especially terrorists, remains a matter of great concern to the international community. In that regard, in resolution 1540 (2004) we recognize an important instrument to prevent non-State actors from acquiring, developing, trafficking in or using nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery.

However, restricting our efforts only to fighting proliferation represents a limited perspective. There is an urgent need for concrete actions towards effective disarmament by States possessing those weapons. We bear in mind President Obama's commitment to seeking a nuclear-weapon-free world, which we fully support (see S/PV.6191). We concur with his vision that moving towards a safer world requires fulfilling the grand bargain envisioned in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which amounts to countries with nuclear weapons moving towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons not acquiring them, and all countries being able to access peaceful nuclear energy.

In that regard, we appreciate the efforts that have been made within the Security Council to highlight the significance of disarmament in the resolution that we have adopted today. The risk of proliferation will be eradicated only once we achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Brazil believes that a broad approach to the subject covered by resolution 1540 (2004) that takes into account the possibility of peaceful uses under international cooperation is also essential to efforts for a safer world. It is also important to avoid an approach that would cast generalized suspicion on the good faith of countries that develop such peaceful programmes.

Concerning the important role that the group of experts can play, we commend the inclusion of the idea of equitable geographical distribution among the criteria for selecting experts. That responds to the international community's legitimate concern over balance and fair representation. The resolution determines the official establishment of the group of experts. The criteria on which the selection of experts will be based are an important aspect of the continued legitimacy of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004).

The group of experts plays a technical role in assisting the 1540 Committee. The working methods and structure of the group will be discussed in the next few months and recommendations will be issued by August. While we strongly support an effective and well-coordinated group of experts, Brazil does not favour the idea that the group should have a leadership position on a par with or superseding the authority of the 1540 Committee.

The 1540 Committee has carried out important and useful work since 2004. It has kept the Security Council updated on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and has facilitated the provision of assistance to States, at their request. The important work done by the 1540 Committee will continue in the coming years. We fully support the Committee and will continue to do so in the future. Examining the mandate of the Committee every few years is an important opportunity for the international community to adjust its work to an evolving scenario. Some questions may become less relevant or disappear, while new ones may emerge. Brazil will continue to take part in the work of the 1540 Committee in a positive and constructive manner.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): India supports resolution 1977 (2011) extending the mandate of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) for a period of 10 years until 25 April 2021. That extended timeline has been included with a view to help plan assistance and cooperation programmes for States requesting such assistance from the 1540 Committee on a long-term and predictable basis.

India has expressed its unwavering commitment to global efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their means of delivery. India recognizes that the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery is a major challenge facing the international community. As a victim of terrorism for over three decades, we are fully cognizant of the catastrophic dangers that the transfer of WMDs to non-State actors and terrorists could entail. Clandestine proliferation networks have led to insecurity for all and must not be allowed to reappear. The international community must join hands in eliminating the risks related to sensitive materials and technologies falling into the hands of terrorists and non-State actors. The focus on non-State actors should in no way diminish State accountability in combating terrorism and dismantling its support infrastructure and its linkages with WMDs.

India therefore supported the general objectives of resolution 1540 (2004). That resolution is in line with our own General Assembly resolution "Measures to prevent terrorists from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction", adopted by consensus every year since it was first introduced in 2002.

India has enacted a number of effective laws and regulations and has put in place institutionalized administrative mechanisms to prohibit access to WMDs by terrorists and non-State actors. After the adoption of resolution 1540 (2004), India took additional steps to further strengthen its existing legislative and regulatory mechanism for exercising control over WMDs and their means of delivery.

The WMD Act was enacted in June 2005. The Act provides for integrated and overarching legislation on prohibiting unlawful activities in relation to WMDs, their delivery systems and related materials, equipment and technologies. The amendments to the 1992 Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act passed in 2010 further strengthened our national export control system. India is committed to maintaining effective national export controls consistent with the highest international standards, and is prepared to make its contribution as a full member of the respective multilateral export control regimes.

India has fulfilled its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, including the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles in advance of the timeline agreed under the Convention. India is also a State party to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and participates in the activities under the Convention.

India filed its report on resolution 1540 (2004) in November 2004, and has submitted periodic updates. An Indian expert participated in the work of the 1540 Committee between 2007 and 2009. India has also expressed its readiness to offer assistance to other countries in capacity-building and in fulfilling their obligations under resolution 1540 (2004). India has also participated in activities related to the resolution such as a workshop on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), held jointly by the United States of America and Sri Lanka in Colombo in June 2009.

We welcomed President Obama's initiative in convening the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., in April 2010. India welcomed the adoption of the Summit communiqué and the workplan, which establishes a common platform for all participating States. We see the Nuclear Security Summit process as building pragmatic and purposeful frameworks, setting benchmarks and standards, and fostering confidence for international cooperation to supplement and not replace existing multilateral institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). India believes that the primary responsibility for ensuring nuclear security rests at the national level, but national responsibility must be accompanied by responsible behaviour by States. All States should scrupulously abide by their international obligations.

Measures for the implementation of the resolution should be undertaken by States based on their national practices and processes. Resolution 1540 (2004) has contributed to greater awareness among States on the need for effective measures at the national level to prevent terrorists and non-State actors from gaining access to sensitive materials and technologies. Reporting by States of their implementation measures facilitates the overview of the implementation by the 1540 Committee.

Assistance and cooperation for States requesting such assistance is a key element of the implementation process. Such assistance programmes should be suited to specific national or regional requirements. The 1540 Committee has also established cooperative relations with several international organizations. Consistent with their respective mandates, the IAEA and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons can contribute to the objectives of resolution 1540 (2004). We also feel that the full implementation of the communiqué and workplan of the Nuclear Security Summit can also contribute to our common goals.

India remains committed to achieving the objectives of resolution 1540 (2004). India is also prepared to render the necessary assistance to States requesting such assistance in fulfilling their obligations under the resolution. We hope that the extended deadline will also encourage the Committee to take its work forward in a spirit of transparency and cooperation, so that all Member States feel that they have a common stake in the successful implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.6519

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6519th meeting

Wednesday, 20 April 2011, 3.25 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Osorio	(Colombia)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Portugal	Mr. Vaz Patto
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2011/244)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2011/244)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I would like to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/244, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I now give the floor to Mr. Atul Khare.

Mr. Khare: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Darfur. The Council has before it the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2011/244) on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), as well as a separate report on the Darfur-based political process, which was requested in the Council's presidential statement of 9 February (S/PRST/2011/3).

I would like to begin my remarks today with the latest developments in Darfur, followed by updates on the negotiations in Doha. I will then highlight some of the key issues related to the launch of the Darfur-based political process, including the enabling environment.

Following clashes between forces of the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements in January and February, there was a decrease in hostilities in March. While the situation remains relatively quiet, there is reason for concern, particularly in North and South Darfur.

On 8 April, the commanders of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)-Minni Minawi faction and the SLA-Abdul Wahid faction issued a joint statement claiming that they had been attacked by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in Muzbat, 63 kilometres north-east of Umm Baru, in North Darfur.

On 13 April, a UNAMID patrol sent to the area to verify the reports was stopped at Turba by unidentified armed men in four vehicles, who prevented the patrol from proceeding further. The commander identified the group as belonging to a JEM/SLA-Minni Minawi coalition that had returned to the area to reclaim it from the Sudanese Armed Forces. He alleged that coalition forces were in control of Farawiya, Muzbat and Gurbura.

On 14 April, a UNAMID verification patrol to Farawiya was informed by local civilians that no movement of armed groups had been observed in the area, but that there had been overflights by the Sudanese Armed Forces. It is UNAMID's assessment, on the basis of currently available information, that these areas around Umm Baru remain under Government control.

UNAMID has received reports of an SAF build-up in north-western North Darfur. The Government has indicated that this is in response to the current instability in Libya, its concerns over the proliferation of arms in the area and the likelihood of rebel movements across the border areas.

On 15 April, UNAMID received information about a build-up of SAF and SLA-Minni Minawi forces in the areas of Marla, Sania Afandu, Adob, Labado and Muhajeria. UNAMID verification patrols have confirmed the presence of both forces in those areas. The Mission is continuing to closely monitor these developments in North and South Darfur.

With regard to the security of UNAMID and humanitarian personnel, on 5 April a UNAMID patrol was ambushed by armed elements in Kutum, in North Darfur. A UNAMID police adviser from Sierra Leone unfortunately made the ultimate sacrifice. One of the perpetrators was killed in the ensuing firefight. The Government subsequently apprehended one suspect, and the Mission is working with the authorities to ensure a full investigation, accountability and justice on this matter.

On 11 April, a group of persons suspected of belonging to the National Intelligence and Security Service entered the Kalma internally displaced persons camp and took away a resident, who is also a national staff member of the non-governmental organization (NGO) International Medical Corps. In response, internally displaced youth held hostage another national staff member of the International Medical Corps, seven staff members of the national NGO Jebel Marra and four national staff members of the international NGO American Refugee Committee. Two days later, on 13 April, the 12 aid workers were released unharmed following the timely intervention of UNAMID and the humanitarian country team. Humanitarian activities were subsequently restarted partially by NGO staff present in the Kalma camp. The location of the resident of the Kalma camp remains unknown. The National Intelligence and Security Service in South Darfur denies its involvement in this incident.

During his visit to Nyala on 18 April, Joint Special Representative Gambari assured humanitarian workers that UNAMID would make every effort to facilitate their earliest possible full return to the camp.

On 20 April, following negotiations undertaken by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNAMID and those NGOs responsible for delivering humanitarian assistance in Kalma camp with the sheikhs and the youth group responsible for the hostage-taking, it was agreed that full services would resume. Clinics in the camp remain open and April food distribution was completed today.

It has been 98 days since three crew members of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service were abducted in Um Shalaya, West Darfur, on 13 January. The United Nations continues to work with the Government to secure their safe release.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the clashes in January and February led to the displacement of the population in some areas of North and South Darfur. The numbers contained in the report are contested by the Government, which feels that they are inflated. These numbers include primary, secondary and temporary displacement. A joint working group of representatives from the Government, the United Nations and humanitarian partners has been set up to review the calculation of the new displacements, agree on a common figure and review the response to the most pressing humanitarian needs of these displaced persons.

With regard to access, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, between 1 January and 31 March the Mission conducted 10,619 patrols, of which 18 were impeded by the Government and one by the SLA-Abdul Wahid faction. To update that figure, between 1 and 16 April the Mission conducted 2,542 patrols and faced 10 movement restrictions. Nine of these 10 restrictions were due to SAF and the National Intelligence and Security Service preventing UNAMID patrols from reaching Kutum and Tabit in North Darfur; Kalma, Abu Matariq, Kass, Balil and El Deain in South Darfur; and Tine in West Darfur, citing either lack of prior notification or ongoing military activities. On one occasion, in the case of the patrol to Muzbat mentioned earlier, armed elements prevented the patrol from proceeding.

From 1 January to 31 March, the Government refused 95 of 5,846 flight clearance requests submitted by the Mission, mainly during and because of ongoing military operations. This included 14 occasions of denial of the use of tactical helicopters out of 152 requests made. The Government granted immediate clearance for the use of tactical helicopters and other aircraft in the case of the 5 April attack on the UNAMID convoy in Kutum, which I mentioned earlier.

In a positive development, and following close follow-up with national authorities, UNAMID access to Jebel Marra has increased, with four patrols and assessment missions and over 500 kilograms of relief aid reaching the area in March. In recent meetings between Joint Special Representative Gambari and the leadership of SLA-Abdul Wahid, it was agreed that the rebel group would facilitate humanitarian access. The establishment of a UNAMID team site in Jebel Marra was also discussed. Multiple missions to Jebel Marra are scheduled to take place from 27 April to 11 May, during which UNAMID and United Nations agencies plan to deliver humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, and to pursue with the SLA-Abdul Wahid commanders arrangements to ensure greater humanitarian access and the establishment of a static UNAMID presence in the area.

Following a working-level tripartite meeting on 31 March in Khartoum, the Government indicated that it was in the process of approving 600 of the 1,261 outstanding visa requests. The Government has also indicated its readiness to review the remaining requests. Since that time, 306 visas have been issued, almost half of them for military personnel. As of today, 20 April, the number of pending visas stood at 1,117. UNAMID, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support continue to work closely with the Government on this issue.

While there are a number of difficulties and challenges on the ground, UNAMID and the Government continue to consult closely on all issues of concern to peace and stability in the region. In this regard, the Joint Special Representative has discussed with the Government its intent to hold the referendum. The Government has indicated that, should an agreement be reached through the Doha negotiations, such an agreement would supersede the Darfur Peace Agreement, under which it is proceeding with the holding of the referendum. Joint Special Representative Gambari will continue to consult closely with the Government on these issues.

I would now like to provide an update on the Darfur negotiations taking place in Doha since the issuance of the Secretary-General's report on UNAMID and the Darfur political process.

The peace process has entered a crucial phase, with the three parties who are signatories to the framework agreements — the Government of the Sudan, the Justice and Equality Movement and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) — present and fully engaged in the negotiations in Doha. On 24 February, the mediation presented to the three parties six proposed texts covering, first, wealth-sharing; secondly, power-sharing; thirdly, the return and compensation of refugees and internally displaced persons; fourthly, justice and reconciliation; fifthly, human rights and fundamental freedoms; and sixthly, security arrangements.

It is the mediation's intent to submit to the parties by 27 April — a week from now — a draft comprehensive agreement for their final consideration. In that regard, on 18 April, the mediation requested the Government of the Sudan, the Liberation and Justice Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement to continue to work together with a view to submitting to it all final comments on the six chapters of a comprehensive peace agreement thus far provided to the parties. A seventh chapter on mechanisms necessary for the implementation of the agreement will be provided to the parties in the coming days.

The positions of the LJM and the Government of the Sudan on the texts are nearly reconcilable. The Justice and Equality Movement, however, has made a number of fundamental comments and suggestions. We appreciate the full support of the international community for the mediation, including its interventions with the parties, to impress on them the need to seize this opportunity for a comprehensive peace. We call on the international community to send a clear message to the JEM that it must fully engage on the basis of the draft provided to it and reach a comprehensive agreement in the time frame established by the mediation.

With regard to Minni Minawi, it will be recalled that he has disassociated himself from the Darfur Peace Agreement and continues to engage in hostilities on the ground. Abdul Wahid also continues to remain outside the negotiation process, despite significant attempts to bring him into it. The full support of the international community continues to be required to reconcile Minni Minawi and Abdul Wahid with the negotiation process.

The mediation has indicated that, given the time necessary to finalize the draft comprehensive agreement and to organize the logistical requirements of the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference, the Conference will now be held from 18 to 23 May. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the Conference will bring together the Government of the Sudan, the armed movements, Darfuri civil society, including internally displaced persons and refugees, Sudanese political parties and others, in order to reach a consensus on the provisions contained in the proposed comprehensive agreement and thus achieve popular endorsement of the proposed resolution to the conflict. The Conference will also gather the mediation's international partners to provide international support to the endorsed resolution. The intent is to provide an opportunity to build support among all stakeholders and to allow the United Nations and the African Union (AU) to work proactively towards bringing all parties, including the armed movements, to a harmonized approach to achieving peace. UNAMID and the mediation are working closely on the selection and transportation of participants from Darfur to Doha for the Stakeholders Conference. UNAMID is also following up on these issues closely with the Government.

As the Council is aware, the launch of the Darfur-based political process is envisaged as a means of furthering popular support for the outcome, and the implementation of the outcome, of the negotiations in Doha. While there remain different views on the sequencing of the political process and the peace negotiations taking place in Doha, we continue to believe that all efforts should be made to reach an agreement through the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference with a view to ensuring that the Darfur political process is a forum for discussion and buy-in at the local level and to enhancing aspects of the agreement of importance to local communities in Darfur.

As emphasized by the African Union Peace and Security Council, the Darfur-based political process must take place in an environment that will guarantee its credibility by ensuring, first, the civil and political rights of participants such that they can exercise their views without fear of retribution; secondly, the freedom of speech and assembly to permit open consultations; thirdly, the freedom of movement of participants and UNAMID; and fourthly, proportional participation among Darfurians. The 18 February meeting of the Joint Special Representative and Special Envoys further defined these conditions to include freedom from harassment, arbitrary arrest and intimidation, and freedom from interference by the Government or armed movements.

The intention of the Government to lift emergency law will go a long way towards fulfilling these conditions. The United Nations welcomes the Government's announcement and looks forward to its implementation. In a recent meeting with the Joint Special Representative, the Government recommitted itself to ensuring the creation of an enabling environment and working with UNAMID and the AU High-Level Implementation Panel towards this end. In this connection, further work needs to be undertaken on the mechanism to monitor the situation on the ground to ensure that the political and civil rights of the participants in the Darfur-based political process are protected. UNAMID and the AU High-Level Implementation Panel will continue to work with the Government towards this end as negotiations in Doha proceed.

Should the current road map towards a comprehensive peace need to be revisited after the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference, the Secretary-General will review the situation with African Union Chairperson Jean Ping and other stakeholders and provide the appropriate recommendations to the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Khare for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Darfur (S/2011/244) and the implementation of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in the framework of political developments indicates that progress has been made in the Doha negotiations, reflecting the onset of the political process. That is a source of hope.

I should like here to stress the importance of inter-Darfurian dialogue to give voice to the silent majority of Darfur in all social categories and strata, including tribal leaders, civil administrators and civil society organizations with experience on the ground in Darfur, on whom any agreement on Darfur will depend.

We have transmitted to the Security Council the decree issued by the President of the Republic on 29 March calling for a referendum on the administrative status of Darfur. As Council members are aware, paragraph 55 of the Darfur Peace Agreement stipulates that the "permanent status of Darfur shall be determined through a referendum held simultaneously in the three states of Darfur". Thus, the convening of the referendum on the administrative status of Darfur is in implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

Furthermore, it is well known that my country is drafting a new constitution to take effect following the end of the transitional period for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 9 July. The preparation of the prospective permanent constitution will require the administrative status of Darfur to be settled first. We have informed the Security Council in writing of the details of the referendum, which is expected to be held under the supervision of the National Electoral Commission and international, regional and local observers.

We note that the Government of the Sudan is making strenuous efforts to provide an appropriate atmosphere for the conduct of the referendum and to design a package of arrangements, including the lifting of the state of emergency and guarantees of the freedoms of assembly and expression. The Government will pursue its consultations with political forces, the signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement and the

Declaration of Principles, UNAMID, the African Union Panel of the Wise led by President Thabo Mbeki, and other international actors with a view to conducting the referendum in a manner that will achieve the desired goal of enabling the people of Darfur to participate in the voting process to determine in an impartial manner the administrative of Darfur.

In outlining the security situation in Darfur, the report before us indicates that tribal disputes, banditry and plunder by armed groups are the principal sources of insecurity in some parts of the region. As members of the Council well know, certain leaders of armed movements have pursued their consistent violations of the ceasefire and attacks on police stations. Our Government has therefore assumed its responsibility for extending security and the rule of law and guaranteeing the delivery of humanitarian assistance through regular security operations. Some claim that our forces have undertaken aerial bombardment, but such claims cannot belie the truth that stability and security now prevail in all provinces of Darfur, with the exception of a few pockets where certain armed groups have taken refuge.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in Darfur, a high-level committee is in place to follow up the implementation of the humanitarian protocol. The Government of the Sudan, UNAMID and representatives of humanitarian organizations working in Darfur all participate in that committee. The committee continues to regularly oversee humanitarian operations in the region. Paragraph 12 of the report of the Secretary-General refers to the decrease in attacks on humanitarian personnel, which was the result of police security patrols carried out with the participation of UNAMID.

Paragraph 51 of the Secretary-General's report sets out the current situation in UNAMID, which is better as compared to many other peace missions. Suffice it to say, that 92 per cent of the Mission's military force is now deployed on the ground. That is in addition to the police and civilian elements already deployed. This reflects my Government's seriousness and eagerness to cooperate with the United Nations.

In that connection, I would like to say that, given that this is such a major mission, the granting of entry visas may be delayed because of routine procedures. That should not distract attention from the actual cooperation that exists, which led to the deployment of the Mission's components. With regard to the draft before the Council concerning visas, I would like to say that the backlog of pending visas is due to duplications in requests made through more than one channel, rather than just through the UNAMID command. In that regard, I wish to recall that, as soon as this issue was raised under the tripartite meeting mechanism, my Government agreed to grant the requested entry visas — a total of 600 such visas. However, requests are being submitted daily and there are now more than 1,000 such requests. This is normal. I wish to reassure the Council that we will grant visas for all requests.

I would also like to say that, while we recognize the difficulties in outreach to police personnel in Darfur who do not speak Arabic, we still request UNAMID and Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) officials to employ Arabic-speaking personnel, which will facilitate their mission. We would like to express our appreciation for the considerable efforts made by the Mission and DPKO in that regard.

In conclusion, the Government of the Sudan is moving ahead with its intensive efforts to achieve sustainable and comprehensive peace in Darfur as soon as possible. We are doing so by pressing ahead with the political process internally through the Darfur dialogue. That, in turn, complements efforts currently under way by the joint mediation in Doha.

I appeal to the Council not to leave the peace process in Darfur contingent upon the whims of the rebel leadership, which continues to publicly reject repeated calls from the Security Council and the international community. We hope that the Council will call on rebel leaders to join the negotiating process. The Council is no doubt well aware of its responsibilities and the role entrusted to it by the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. The achievement of just and comprehensive peace is the only option for the people of Darfur. How long will the Council remain quiet in the face of the rigid and controversial positions adopted by the leaders of movements who in principle reject peace?

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Sudan for his statement.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6520

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6520th meeting

Thursday, 21 April 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Osorio/Mr. Alzate	(Colombia)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the representatives of Australia, Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 18 April 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2011/259 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council that will be held on Thursday, 21 April 2011, on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diallo, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: As always, it is a pleasure and an honour to be here to report to the Security Council. I regret to report that the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations has persisted in the last month. This is of particular concern given the institutional achievements of the Palestinian Authority and the evolving regional situation. Bold and decisive steps are needed to resolve this decades-long conflict, with vision, leadership and responsibility on the part of all concerned. It is also important that any outbreaks of violence that could undermine political efforts be prevented and that the parties refrain from provocative steps on the ground.

Quartet envoys continued to work with the Israelis and the Palestinians to maximize prospects for resuming direct negotiations on a two-State solution. Regrettably, after follow-up meetings with the parties on 5 April, it was determined that more time was needed for consultations before the next Quartet meeting could be scheduled. The Quartet remains committed to convening such a meeting as soon as possible. The United Nations continues to work for a balanced and effective Quartet initiative that could help the parties to engage meaningfully in direct negotiations and give a clear international signal of the importance of finding a way forward.

Both parties should be concerned at the fact that the political track is falling behind the significant progress being made by the Palestinian Authority in its State-building agenda. In its report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) meeting in Brussels on 13 April, the United Nations made clear its assessment that in the six areas where we are most engaged with the Palestinian Authority, governmental functions are now sufficient for a viable Government of a State. The six areas include governance, rule of law and human rights; livelihoods and productive sectors; education and culture; health; social protection; and infrastructure and water. In parallel, Israeli measures to facilitate movement have also supported economic activity and access to basic services.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund also reported strong progress in institution-building at the AHLC meeting, and the AHLC Chair concluded that the Palestinian Authority was above the threshold for a functioning State in the key sectors studied. However, we must be aware that these admirable achievements have been to date limited to certain areas of the occupied Palestinian territory and do not apply yet to East Jerusalem, much of Area C and Gaza.

The reporting period saw the highest levels of violence in Gaza and Israel since Operation Cast Lead more than two years ago. Violence was ongoing at the time of the last briefing, on 22 March. That same day, four members of a Palestinian family, including three children, were killed by an Israeli strike in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed regret at the unintentional killing of civilians, while stating that Israel was responding to the firing of rockets at Israeli civilians from populated civilian areas in Gaza. The next day, on 23 March, an Israeli civilian was injured in Be'er Sheva by a Grad rocket fired from Gaza.

Efforts to de-escalate the violence led to a brief lull. However, on 2 April, an Israeli airstrike killed three leaders of the Hamas military wing who were allegedly involved in plans to kidnap Israeli citizens in the Sinai during Passover. The Hamas military wing used a guided anti-tank missile to hit a school bus on 7 April, injuring two people, one of whom, a teenager, died last week. Between 7 and 10 April, Israel launched heavy military operations in Gaza. Rockets continued to be fired into Israel, a number of them reportedly intercepted by Israel's new Iron Dome anti-missile defence system. Following further efforts to de-escalate the violence, a new, uneasy calm was restored on 10 April. It has been largely respected since, notwithstanding the firing of two Grad rockets towards Ashdod on 15 April. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Egyptian authorities were actively engaged in efforts to de-escalate the violence.

Overall, Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas, have fired 111 mortar shells and 155 rockets, while Israel has conducted six incursions and 57 air strikes into Gaza since the last briefing to the Security Council. One Israeli child, referred to earlier in the context of the bus incident, was killed, and two civilians were injured by Palestinian rocket fire. Nineteen Palestinian militants and 15 civilians were killed, while 17 militants and 60 civilians were injured in Israeli military actions.

We are alarmed at the actions of Hamas to escalate violence, endangering civilians on both sides and risking a deeper confrontation with Israel. We are also deeply concerned at civilian casualties on both sides. The Secretary-General strongly condemns the firing of rockets from Gaza and calls for it to end. He also reiterates his calls for maximum restraint by Israel. All parties must fully respect international humanitarian law. In the interests of the civilian populations on both sides, we call on the parties to uphold and solidify the prevailing fragile calm.

Citing security concerns, Israel closed the Kerem Shalom crossing point to Gaza from 5 to 12 April. This illustrates the detrimental effect of the violence on the humanitarian situation and the importance of implementing Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) in all its aspects. The weekly average of truckloads entering the Strip during the reporting period was 909, compared with 566 in June 2010 before the announcement of the revised Israeli policy, but still far below pre-closure levels.

During the reporting period, Israel approved six additional United Nations school and road projects in Gaza. However, we urge Israel to give early approval to two United Nations housing projects in Rafah and Khan Yunis comprising 1,100 units. We also hope that coordination procedures to facilitate the entry of approved material will be further streamlined. Greater liberalization of the import of construction materials into Gaza, including aggregate, iron bar and cement, is essential for recovery, as is an increase in exports.

I emphasize the importance of the Government of Israel making more sustained and far-reaching progress towards ending the closure of Gaza, within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). It is essential for the operation of legitimate crossings to be adequate to meeting the needs of Gaza's civilian population.

In the context of media reports of potential flotillas, let me state our belief that the appropriate way to meet needs in Gaza is through legitimate crossings. In this regard, I wish to recall the position of the

Quartet, as expressed in its 21 June 2010 statement, that those wishing to deliver goods to Gaza should do so through established channels so that their cargoes can be inspected and transferred via land crossings into Gaza. The Quartet emphasized that there is no need for unnecessary confrontations and called on all parties to act responsibly in meeting the needs of the people of Gaza. The AHLC also called on all international supporters to make use of existing land crossings to channel their support to Gaza and to abstain from provocations.

We deplore the abduction and murder of Vittorio Arrigoni, an Italian citizen and activist, in Gaza on 15 April, allegedly by a Salafist group. A number of suspects have reportedly clashed with and been arrested by the de facto authorities in Gaza.

I regret to report no progress in efforts to secure the release of Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, who has been in Hamas captivity since 25 June 2006. We continue to call for his release and for immediate humanitarian access to him. We also continue to follow closely the situation of several thousand Palestinians in Israeli prisons, whose human rights must be respected. We continue to underscore the importance of releases of prisoners to the Palestinian Authority.

We also remain concerned that the Palestinian Authority is not able to extend its State-building work to Gaza due to the ongoing Palestinian political divide. This only underscores the need for progress towards Palestinian unity within the framework of the Palestinian Authority and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In this regard, I note that consultations on the Palestinian reconciliation continue, although they have not led to the formation of a unity Government, as President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad had hoped they would.

In the meantime, preparations for municipal elections on 9 July continue in the West Bank. Hamas has yet to authorize electoral work in Gaza. The Palestinian Central Election Commission opened voter lists for exhibition and challenges between 9 and 14 April in the West Bank, including for the approximately 40,000 newly registered voters.

We are very concerned at ongoing Israeli settlement activity and demolition of Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. On 4 April, the Government of Israel retroactively authorized construction work and plans for further expansion in the West Bank settlements. We remain very concerned at plans for more than 2,200 settlement units in East Jerusalem, although we note that their further consideration has been postponed until May. More permanent measures to curtail and halt settlement expansion are needed. Settlement activity is contrary to international law and Israel's commitments under the Road Map, and detrimentally affects Palestinian readiness to return to direct negotiations. We call on Israel to respect international humanitarian law.

Palestinian security forces continued to work to maintain law and order in the West Bank. Investigation is ongoing into the murder on 4 April of the actor and director Juliano MerKhamis, who will be remembered as a symbol of coexistence and peace.

Following the Itamar murder on 11 March, two suspects from the neighbouring Palestinian village of Awarta were recently arrested for allegedly perpetrating the killing, and a number of others were arrested as alleged accomplices. During the investigations, the 6,500 inhabitants of Awarta were placed under several curfews. Over 400 men and 80 women were reportedly interrogated, and many homes were searched.

Since last month's briefing to this Council, Israeli security forces conducted 321 search operations in the West Bank, during which 38 Palestinians were injured and 228 arrested. Ten Palestinians were injured by Israeli settlers during the reporting period. Demonstrations continued against the barrier, which deviates from the Green Line in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, resulting in 19 Palestinian injuries and a number of arrests.

We welcome the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) decision of 6 April to systematically investigate all Palestinian casualties in the West Bank caused by IDF fire among individuals not engaged in hostilities. We look forward to the effective implementation of this important measure of accountability.

Turning to the subject of Lebanon, almost three months after his nomination as Prime Minister-designate by President Sleiman, consultations by Najib Mikati have not yet led to the formation of a new Government. Mr. Mikati and the President have decided to give additional time to the process in order to ensure that the composition of the next Government will be as desired by all Lebanese and in accordance with the Constitution.

Against this background, there have been some security incidents in Lebanon. On 27 March, a small bomb exploded in a church in the eastern city of Zahleh, causing damage but no causalities. No party claimed responsibility for the attack, which came four days after seven Estonian nationals were kidnapped while cycling on a road near Zahleh, in an area close to the border with Syria. Despite several arrests, the motives of the kidnappers and the fate of the cyclists are not known.

In Nahr el-Bared camp, the first delivery of homes in the reconstructed camp took place on 19 April. This was a significant milestone, giving hope to the community displaced since the destruction of their camp in 2007. I call upon donors to also contribute towards the full reconstruction Nahr el-Bared.

The overall situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has remained generally quiet and stable. Israeli air violations continued on an almost daily basis.

The international community is rightly concerned over the protracted stalemate in the peace process. We stress the importance of supporting and empowering the leadership of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad and of bringing the parties back to the table. Despite the Palestinian Authority's accomplishments, the institutional achievements of the State-building agenda are approaching their limits within the political and physical space currently available. Far-reaching rather than incremental steps should be taken by Israel to lead to progress on the ground and to roll back measures of occupation to match the Palestinian Authority's achievements.

At the same time, the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations on all final status issues is urgent. We believe that the international community must play its part in helping the parties to move forward, and we will continue to engage Quartet partners, hoping that the conditions will be met for the holding of a principals' meeting as soon as possible.

The United Nations will continue to work for a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the Security Council's resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Road Map and the agreements previously reached between the parties.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

Before I give the floor to delegations wishing to make statements, I remind all speakers that their statements should be reasonably brief in the light of the 43 requests for the floor today.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Mr. President, I express warm congratulations to your country, Colombia, on its presidency and skilled guidance of the Security Council this month. We also express appreciation to the People's Republic of China for its wise stewardship of the Council last month.

I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lynne Pascoe for his briefing, and renew our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts to uphold the Charter and the principles of United Nations resolutions aimed at realizing a peaceful, just solution to the question of Palestine.

We come before the Security Council at a most historic time in our region, and for our world. The dramatic developments taking place in the Middle East are altering the geopolitical landscape and bringing to the fore the universal aspirations of all peoples for freedom, social and economic justice, democracy and respect for human rights. Those are goals for which the Palestinian people have struggled for decades in their quest to realize their legitimate national aspirations, foremost among them the aspiration to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in their homeland of Palestine. Tragically, the Palestinian wish to live as an independent, free and dignified people in peace and security with all their neighbours — developing, prospering and responsibly contributing as full members of the region and the community of nations — continues to be denied and obstructed.

In the twenty-first century — in spite of the calls by all peace-loving nations and champions of human rights for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands; the realization of an independent State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the 1967 borders; and a just solution to the plight of Palestine refugees — finding the political will to confront this injustice remains elusive. Israel's military occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continues in defiance of all legal, moral and political norms and principles. It is an injustice being systematically perpetrated in full view of the international community, under distorted and illogical pretexts intended to justify the unjustifiable, namely, the subjugation of an entire nation of people.

Regrettably, the appeals to the Security Council to resolve this prolonged conflict, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, by applying to Israel the same legal and moral yardstick applied to all other issues on the global agenda remain unheeded. Consequently, the occupying Power has continued to breach the law, belittling and violating the resolutions of international legitimacy adopted by the Council and other United Nations organs, and to defy the international community with total impunity.

The result has been continued conflict, loss of life and turmoil — to the detriment of Palestinians and Israelis, regional and global peace and security, the rule of law, particularly humanitarian and human rights law and the collective and individual obligations derived therefrom, and the credibility of the international system. The Palestinian people thus remain under occupation, prisoners in their own homeland, besieged and blockaded in the Gaza Strip and confined and abused between settlements, walls and a matrix of hundreds of military checkpoints and Israeli-only roads in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, subject to the mercy of the occupying Power and its destructive acts of aggression, colonization and repression.

This is the present-day reality of the Palestinian people. This is in spite of the fact that their right to self-determination has been reaffirmed annually by the General Assembly and recognized by the International Court of Justice as a right erga omnes; in spite of the reaffirmations of their right to independence and statehood; and in spite of serious efforts by the Palestinian leadership and all concerned regional and international parties aimed at the realization of that right and a just peace settlement based on relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map.

We therefore return to the Security Council with an appeal that it uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security vis-à-vis the question of Palestine. The Council's resolutions remain valid, and we call for all necessary efforts for the implementation of those resolutions. The Council cannot surrender in the face of continued Israeli defiance. It must be unwavering in its calls for respect for the law and its own resolutions and act with conviction to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its obstruction of peace and stability in our region.

In a series of letters sent to the President of the Council in the period since the last open debate in January (see S/PV.6470), we have conveyed in detail the gravity of the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel's intransigence and the lack of political will to confront it have kept the political process frozen and allowed for the continuation of Israeli violations that have further destabilized the situation on the ground.

While the international community decries the killing of civilians, invoking the responsibility to protect and acting to protect civilians in armed conflict, in the Gaza Strip we witness once again a resurgence of the cycle of violence and an escalation of Israeli military attacks, killing and wounding more Palestinian civilians. The deliberate isolation and deprivation of the civilians in Gaza also continues as a result of the Israeli blockade, which is a massive form of collective punishment that amounts to a war crime and a crime against humanity.

We reiterate our call for the protection of the Palestinian civilian population, as well as for the immediate lifting of the Israeli blockade. The easing of restrictions is insufficient. An end to the blockade must mean the freedom of movement of persons and goods into and out of Gaza; the reconstruction of homes, infrastructure and the facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; commercial flows for the rehabilitation of industry and the economy; and the restoration of the link between the West Bank and Gaza. All of this is essential for the revival of hope among our people. Resolution 1860 (2009) must be fully implemented. The Fourth Geneva Convention must be respected. And the occupying Power must be held accountable for its breaches.

In that regard, we reiterate our call for accountability for all the crimes perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population, including in particular in connection with its destructive and deadly military aggression against the Gaza Strip during December 2008. We will continue our efforts to follow-up on the findings and recommendations of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict — the so-called Goldstone report (A/HRC/112/48) — to ensure that justice is served.

Today, I must also reaffirm the strong condemnation by the Palestinian people and their leadership of the killing of Italian peace activist Vittorio Arrigoni by extremists in Gaza. We convey our deepest condolences and sorrow to the victim's family on their tragic loss. We reaffirm that this brutal act in no way reflects the values and sentiments of the Palestinian people, who are so deeply grateful for the support and solidarity they receive from all over the world for their just cause.

As detailed in our letters, Israel has also persisted with its illegal settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in a most flagrant manner. Despite the veto regrettably cast on 18 February (see S/PV.6484), we believe that the international community sent a clear message to the Israeli Government that it rejects this illegal practice and demands the complete cessation of all settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem. Yet, Israel chooses to ignore that message, acting contrary to the law and sabotaging the two-State solution, in spite the international consensus and Israel's alleged commitment to it.

Rather than rolling back and moving to ultimately end the occupation, Israel continues to illegally confiscate Palestinian land, expand settlements unit by unit, build the wall, demolish homes and strip Palestinians of their residency rights — practices that are most intense in and around occupied East Jerusalem — in an attempt to alter the territory's demographic composition and physical contiguity in its favour. The settlers, whose terrorism is increasing and who constitute the core of the illegal colonizing force, also continue to rampage against the indigenous Palestinian population. Palestinian civilians peacefully protesting that rabid Israeli colonization of their land continue to be beaten, injured, killed, detained, jailed and vilified, along with the Israeli and international activists joining them in protests. These demonstrators deserve the same protection as all other civilians peacefully protesting abuse of their rights.

In recent weeks, Israel has also escalated military raids in Palestinian towns and villages, and continues to arbitrarily detain and imprison Palestinian civilians. Most disturbingly, nearly the entire village of Awarta has been detained in connection with the killing of a settler family. This has included the violent forced entry of homes, round-ups of civilians in the dead of night, and the detention of more than 100 women, including the elderly and infirm, who were forced into a camp for interrogation and DNA testing by the occupying forces. This incident underscores yet again the sheer lack of respect for human rights and due process of law by Israel, which continues to imprison thousands of Palestinian civilians, and its total reliance on force, intimidation, humiliation and collective punishment vis-à-vis the Palestinian people under its occupation.

We are at a critical crossroads and believe that no further proof is needed to confirm that the situation will worsen drastically if action is not taken to stem the deterioration and revive the path to peace. What more must we wait for — another Israeli attack against Gaza that will bring more bloodshed, destruction and suffering of innocents, or the further acceleration of the colonization of the West Bank that will result in the collapse of the two-State solution? We cannot allow this to happen. The time for decisive action is now, and we believe that the international community is in full agreement on the matter.

Seizing the small window of opportunity before us will require taking immediate steps to address this volatile crisis and resume a credible peace process on the basis of the internationally supported parameters for a solution. We regret the loss of momentum, including as a result of the repeated postponement of Quartet meetings and a lack of action consistent with the Quartet's target date of September 2011 for the conclusion of a peace settlement, as well as of a lack of unanimity that has to date prevented the arrangement of the long-overdue Security Council mission to the Middle East region proposed by the Russian Federation. The political will must be found to act collectively on the basis of the relevant resolutions and the well-known terms of reference of the peace process. In this regard, we stress the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative and the need to seize the opportunity for peace, security and normalization that this bold initiative presents.

We reiterate our call on the Security Council to uphold its obligations and take the necessary measures to bring an end to Israel's violations against the Palestinian people. We also renew our appeals to all the Quartet members, in the light of the clear commitments they have undertaken in this regard, and call for bold leadership, including on the part of the United States, bearing in mind the role it has assumed in the peace process. A clear endorsement of the parameters of the solution, as reflected in the statement articulated in the Council on 18 February by the United Kingdom, France and Germany and supported by the rest of the European Union and countless other countries, is long overdue and would make a serious contribution to a revival of the political process on a credible basis.

Israeli defiance must no longer be rewarded or tolerated. Israel must be called on to demonstrate its commitment to peace with actions, not just empty words. It must be called on to cease its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and uphold its obligations under international law, as well as the Road Map obligation of a settlement freeze. It must be called upon to cease all actions aimed at fragmenting and altering the Palestinian-Arab character and identity of the territory in order to advance its unlawful annexation. Israel must also be called on to respect the sensitivity and sanctity of Christian and Muslim holy sites, with an immediate appeal not to obstruct the celebrations of Christian pilgrims, including Palestinians, this Easter in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Only respect for the law and responsible actions, including ending incitement and provocation, can build trust and demonstrate to the Palestinian people whether or not Israel is a credible peace partner. This is imperative to reviving negotiations on all final status issues in order to achieve a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will bring an end to the Israeli occupation and realize the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, with an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, and a just, agreed solution for the Palestine refugee question based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Despite recent serious disappointments, the Palestinian people have not lost hope, and their leadership remains committed to achieving by political means a just peace settlement that will ensure the resolution of all final status issues. We continue to exert every effort in this regard, working proactively and constructively to alleviate the suffering of our people and to promote the ultimate fulfilment of their legitimate national aspirations, including their right to self-determination and freedom — an inalienable right that is non-negotiable.

This has recently included renewed efforts to promote Palestinian reconciliation and unity. Fully recognizing the damage inflicted on our just cause by internal division, President Mahmoud Abbas has announced an initiative to go to Gaza as soon as possible with the aim of ending the division and a dark chapter in our history, and of restoring the unity of our people and land. We believe that this is imperative in order to heal and strengthen our people as they continue on the journey towards realizing their noble national goals, and we call on all concerned parties to support this effort.

The leadership also continues to work non-stop to implement the State-building plan launched nearly two years ago by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. This plan is rapidly advancing to completion by August 2011, with the only obstacle to the full realization of its objectives being the ongoing Israeli occupation. We welcome the endorsements of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians regarding Palestinian readiness for independence. We reiterate our gratitude for the strong international support of this important initiative, which is an integral part of our national efforts to achieve independence. In that connection, we also reiterate our gratitude to all Member States that have extended recognition to Palestine on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the international consensus on the two-State solution. We urge countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so at the earliest possible time in order to contribute to making our independence a reality soon.

I reaffirm our determination to achieve an end to the Israeli occupation begun in 1967, and the independence this year of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, by the target date of September 2011 set by the Quartet, announced by United States President Obama, and endorsed by the General Assembly. We remain committed to the path of peace and call on the Security Council and the entire international community to redouble their efforts at this critical time to uphold the principles for which the United Nations stands in order to bring an end to this conflict, enable Palestine to take its rightful place among the community of nations with pride and dignity, and allow peace and security to flourish in our region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Reuben (Israel) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to thank you, Mr. President, and the Colombian delegation for your efforts in carrying out the work of the Security Council during this month.

(*spoke in English*)

Today's debate occurs in the midst of historic changes in the Middle East. With these changes, which hold the promise of spreading new freedom and prosperity in our region, we also see many challenges. Extremists and terrorists continue to pursue the same destructive agendas, seeking to take advantage of the turbulence created by the transformations that are now occurring.

Recent events in the Gaza Strip provide another clear example of the destabilizing threat posed by these terrorists and their patrons, bringing to light once again, the depth of their callousness in carrying out violent attacks that deliberately target innocent civilians — men, women and children.

Since the beginning of March, Hamas and other terrorist groups have launched some 92 rockets and 141 mortars at civilians throughout southern Israel, as part of what is the most serious escalation of projectile fire emanating from Gaza in more than two years. There is no question about the intended targets of these attacks. They have launched rocket after rocket at major Israeli population centres that are home to hundreds of thousands of people. They have struck houses and buses, factories and farms, synagogues and schools.

Just two weeks ago, on 7 April, Hamas members used an anti-tank missile that they had smuggled into the Gaza Strip to strike and completely destroy a school bus travelling in southern Israel. This act of terrorism injured the bus driver and fatally wounded 16-year-old Daniel Aryeh Wildfich, who passed away this week from injuries he sustained in that attack.

As residents of New York, we all see the yellow school buses that bring local children to school. Some in the Hall entrust those buses to safely transport their own children. I ask my colleagues sitting around the table, Can you imagine how you would feel if an anti-tank missile was deliberately fired at such a bus in Manhattan or Brooklyn? This is the reality facing many Israelis today. This is also the reality facing the Israeli Government as it seeks to pursue the terrorists that carry out these horrific attacks — terrorists who consistently demonstrate their disregard for any considerations of human life and basic precepts of international law.

I am continually astonished that some in the international community express the belief that the de facto terrorist organization now in control of Gaza can conduct an independent, credible and impartial investigation into the crimes that it commits on a daily basis. It is naive, at best, to put such faith in that terrorist group, which time and again shows only disdain for the universal human values on which such an investigation would be based.

The use of an anti-tank missile to attack an Israeli school bus reminds us of the dangerous consequences of the continued smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip. Iran and Syria remain the primary sponsors of this illegal activity, which is carried out by both land and sea.

On March 15, Israel made the international community aware of one recent attempt by Iran and Syria to smuggle weapons into Gaza when three containers carrying some 40 tons of weaponry — including C-704 advanced anti-ship missiles — were captured on-board the *MV Victoria* cargo vessel. These containers of weapons were concealed among a cargo of lentils and cotton, providing yet another example of Iran and Syria's cynical and dangerous practice of using civilian ships and airplanes to transfer weapons to their proxies in our region. This incident reveals only the tip of the iceberg of Iran and Syria's illegal smuggling activities.

Unfortunately, the Security Council and the international community do not pay appropriate attention to the illegal smuggling of arms into Gaza — a critical aspect of resolution 1860 (2009). In spite of the frequent discussions held in the Security Council about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, there has never been a serious debate in this forum about the clear threat that arms smuggling into Gaza poses to the security of Israel and to the stability of our region. Every day, more Israelis are placed within the range of terrorist rockets as a result of illegal arms smuggling into Gaza. The alarming potential for using these smuggled weapons to attack civilian targets in our country continues to be demonstrated over and over again. This month, terrorists in Gaza struck a school bus. Next month, it may be a ship or a civilian airliner. Israel calls on the Security Council and the international community to devote much more attention to the issue of arms smuggling to the Gaza Strip and to take tangible measures to halt this illegal activity.

On the subject of the Gaza Strip, allow me also to draw the Council's attention to plans for a provocative action that holds the potential to escalate conflict and create instability in our already very fragile region. A number of non-governmental organizations and other groups have made public their intention to direct a large flotilla of some 15 ships and more than 1,000 individuals to challenge Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip. This action, which seems to be planned for the second half of May, has been organized by groups and individuals that hold many ties to Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Numerous participants engaged in the planning of this flotilla have made very troubling statements expressing their willingness to become martyrs in this effort.

As is widely known, there are established mechanisms through which humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the Gaza Strip through Israel. These channels are being used daily by United Nations agencies and other international actors. My country remains ready to receive such goods in the Port of Ashdod and to transfer them to the Gaza Strip after security inspection.

Many international leaders, including representatives of the United Nations, have spoken out clearly against such flotillas and about the need for humanitarian supplies to be transferred to the Gaza Strip only through established channels. For example, in his briefing before the Council today and last July (see S/PV.6363), Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe said that such convoys were not helpful in resolving the basic economic problems in Gaza and needlessly carried the potential for escalation.

Many statements issued at the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in Brussels last week offered the same perspective, including the Chair's summary, which called on all international supporters to make use of the existing land crossings to channel their support to Gaza, and abstain from provocations.

The flotilla anticipated for May is clearly designed to serve purely as a political provocation, and not to advance any humanitarian goal. Let me stress that Israel is not interested in confrontation. However, we are firmly determined to enforce our naval blockade on Gaza, which is solely intended to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition to the Gaza Strip and to stop additional terrorists from infiltrating the area.

Israel calls on the United Nations and all members of the international community to speak with a clear and resolute voice against this new provocation and to take all necessary measures to prevent it from occurring.

Israel continues to implement significant measures to improve life for Palestinians on the ground. In the West Bank, my Government is working closely with the Palestinian Authority to promote economic growth and institution-building. Since the beginning of 2010, Israel has removed more than two thirds of the roadblocks in the West Bank and expanded its professional dialogue with the Palestinian Authority in a variety of areas. These and other measures helped to grow the West Bank economy by approximately 8 per cent over the course of 2010, prompting a consistent rise in the area's standard of living.

In spite of the fact that Palestinian terrorists continue to launch attacks against Israeli towns from the Gaza Strip, Israel has taken significant steps to improve life for the area's residents. For instance, Israel has put in place new arrangements and mechanisms to usher in a substantial increase in the quantities and variety of products available for import and export, which have helped grow the Gaza Strip economy by approximately 15 per cent over the course of 2010.

An average of 159 truckloads of supplies were delivered to Gaza daily during the second half of 2010, which was nearly double the number of truckloads that were delivered during the first half of the year. Israel has also established a new joint coordination and supervision mechanism to move forward international humanitarian projects in the Gaza Strip overseen by third parties, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United Nations Development Programme. As of the beginning of March, Israel had approved 121 such projects in Gaza, in a wide range of fields, such as education and water and sewage infrastructure. We have facilitated the transfer of more than 55,000 tons of building materials for use in those projects since the beginning of 2010.

As I have done in the Council before, I reiterate Israel's call to the Palestinians to rejoin us in direct negotiations without delay; for it is clear that peace can only be achieved through direct negotiations. It cannot be imposed from the outside. Any lasting peace agreement must be built on the core principles of mutual recognition and security. As Israel's President Shimon Peres made clear to United Nations Ambassadors during his visit to New York this month, we need solutions, not resolutions.

I urge all members of the Council to consider that in just the past two months Israelis have witnessed hundreds of projectiles fired at our communities from Gaza, the brutal murder of five members of the Fogel family in Itamar and the explosion of a bomb at a bus stop in the centre of Jerusalem, which killed a woman from the United Kingdom and injured some 50 other people. Those are just a few examples of the complex security challenges that Israel continues to face on a daily basis, which must be addressed in any future peace agreement.

Security, however, is not the only obstacle to peace. Enjoying lasting peace will also require that we build a culture of mutual understanding and tolerance, based on clear recognition of both peoples' right to exist. Israel's commitment to recognizing a future Palestinian State must be met with an equal acknowledgement that Israel is the Jewish State for the Jewish people. The Palestinian leadership must be unambiguous in its recognition of my nation's right to exist and take real steps to prepare its population to live side by side with Israelis. They must also show their commitment to peace by accepting responsibilities and not just demanding rights, meeting directly with Israeli leaders, who are just minutes away, to get down to the real work of negotiating two States for two peoples.

This week the Jewish people are observing the holiday of Passover, during which we remember our deliverance from slavery thousands of years ago and reaffirm our commitment to the importance of freedom for all people. However, this year, as we cherish our own freedom, Israelis continue to hope and pray for the freedom of our kidnapped soldier, Gilad Shalit. Israel remains deeply concerned about Gilad's continued captivity and the fact that he has been deprived of his most basic human rights, including any visit from the Red Cross, for nearly five years. The international community must do all in its power — and more than has been done thus far — to bring about his swift release.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing today.

The United States remains deeply committed to a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, agreed to by the parties. As President Obama said after his recent meeting with Israeli President Peres,

> "With the winds of change blowing through the Arab world, it is more urgent than ever that we try to seize the opportunity to create a peaceful solution between the Palestinians and the Israelis".

We continue to consult with the Israelis and the Palestinians, as well as to work with the Quartet and our partners in the region, towards our shared goal of a two-State solution. Negotiations between the parties remain the only path to a solution that resolves all issues and establishes a sovereign State of Palestine alongside a secure State of Israel as a key part of a comprehensive peace among Israel and all of its neighbours.

In that regard, let me say a word about settlements. Like every United States Administration for decades, we do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity. We have long urged both parties to avoid actions, including in Jerusalem, that could undermine trust or prejudge negotiations. The fate of existing settlements must be dealt with by the parties along with the other permanent status issues.

We will continue to work with the Palestinian people as they lay the foundations for a future Palestinian State. At the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians held in Brussels on 13 April, the United States welcomed the progress the Palestinian Authority has made on the crucial task of building public institutions and capacities and improving conditions for economic growth. We also underscore the importance of moving forward on the other track — political negotiations that will result in a future Palestinian State. Palestinians deserve the dignity and justice of a State of their own and the freedom to chart their own destiny, and Israelis deserve to live in security, at peace with their neighbours and confident in their future.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms recent attacks on innocent civilians. We are deeply concerned by the escalation of rocket and mortar fire from Gaza into southern Israel. We are particularly disturbed by reports indicating the increased use of advanced weaponry, including rockets, in attacks against Israeli civilians. After enduring dozens of rocket attacks on civilian targets in southern Israel, including the deeply disturbing use of an advanced anti-tank missile in a fatal attack on a yellow school bus, Israel responded by exercising its inalienable right to self-defence.

We must work together to stop Hamas and other violent extremists from launching terrorist attacks and bringing increased misery to the people of Gaza. Let there be no doubt: there is no justification for targeting innocent civilians, and those responsible for these terrorist acts must be held accountable. We also call again on Hamas to immediately release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, abducted and held by Hamas since 2006.

The United States remains concerned about conditions in Gaza. We note that the humanitarian situation has improved over the past year, including increases in the range and scope of goods and materials moving in, an increase in international reconstruction activity and a gradual expansion of exports. We will continue to work with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and others to do more to ensure that the needs of the people of Gaza are being met. That includes increasing the flow of commercial goods and construction supplies while taking appropriate measures to ensure that they do not fall into the wrong hands.

We strongly condemn Iran's recent attempts to export advanced weapons and munitions in violation of several resolutions, including resolution 1947 (2010). The interception of Iranian weapons in Turkey, along the Egyptian-Sudanese border and aboard the *MV Victoria*, which was carrying sophisticated anti-ship cruise missiles and other munitions, all clearly demonstrate that Iran is trying to flout the Council's will, dramatically increasing the risks of conflict and instability in the region. We urge all Member States to make clear to Iran the consequences for regional security of its reckless behaviour. All countries have obligations under Security Council resolutions to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition.

We are also deeply concerned about reports that groups are organizing another flotilla that will attempt to sail to Gaza, ostensibly to deliver humanitarian assistance. The recent seizures of advanced weaponry underscore that Israel has clear security interests regarding cargo bound for Gaza. There are existing mechanisms to deliver goods to Gaza and there is no justification for attempts to sail directly to Gaza. We therefore strongly urge all those who wish to deliver goods and assistance to Gaza to do so through existing mechanisms and avoid any provocative actions. That will ensure that the Palestinians' humanitarian needs are addressed and that Israel's legitimate security needs are met. We also urge all Member States to reinforce this message with their nationals and organizations, and to use every legal means at their disposal to discourage additional flotillas to Gaza.

As colleagues know, the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48) is back in the news. We have long said that the issues that it raised should be resolved through credible domestic investigations and follow-up. Israel has the democratic institutions and the ability to carry out serious investigations and is doing so. Justice Goldstone recently concluded that Israel had undertaken an appropriate review process and made changes in its combat doctrine.

As we made clear when the Goldstone report was first presented, we did not see evidence that the Israeli Government had intentionally targeted civilians. Justice Goldstone has now reached the same conclusion. He also concluded that Hamas had "done nothing" to investigate the allegations of its war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. The United States urges the United Nations to end once and for all its actions in relation to the Goldstone report.

Let me now turn to Lebanon. We continue to urge that Lebanon's constitutional process be followed as it forms its next Government. We encourage all parties to avoid threats or other actions that could cause instability in Lebanon and the region. The Council and the international community as a whole must remain firm in their support for Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, resolute in their commitment to all Security Council resolutions related to Lebanon, and vigilant to threats to international peace and security.

We likewise continue to support the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and we reiterate our call on all parties to refrain from any interference or attempts to influence its work. The United States is pleased that, during the 14 April incident along the Blue Line, both parties demonstrated restraint, and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) immediately dispatched patrols to defuse tensions and prevent escalation. We continue to urge both parties to cooperate with UNIFIL in swiftly marking the entire Blue Line to help prevent such incidents. The parties must respect the Blue Line in its entirety.

We are deeply concerned by continuing violence and arrests in Syria, where the Government's brutal crackdown on political protests has already resulted in more than 200 deaths and hundreds of arbitrary arrests, according to credible human rights organizations. We are particularly disturbed by reports that medical personnel have been targeted while attempting to help people injured at the hands of their own Government, and by reports that the injured fear seeking medical attention at hospitals owing to the presence of Syrian secret police. We urge the Syrian Government to allow foreign media, diplomats and human rights organizations to independently verify humanitarian conditions throughout all of Syria. Finally, we urge the Syrian Government to respect the human rights of its people and to implement meaningful political reforms that meet their legitimate aspirations.

Let me close by restating my Government's deeply held commitment to promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people in the region and around the world, including the freedoms of expression and association. We demand accountability wherever those freedoms are violated. We urge all Governments to create an environment in which journalists can carry out their work free from fear and intimidation. We call on all Governments to protect civilians, not to attack them, and to respect their citizens' rights to peaceful assembly and free expression.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): At the outset, we would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing and to stress again the leading role that we believe the United Nations should play in the resolution of the Middle East conflict.

It is clear that the prevailing sentiment in the Arab world is one of deep frustration following the failure of this Council earlier this year to express itself on the critical issue of Israeli settlements, even though the draft resolution (S/2011/24) that my delegation had presented to the Council had been sponsored by an unprecedented number of States. It is a critical issue indeed, not only because settlements are illegal and obstruct peace, but also because they undermine the two-State solution and continue to sow the seeds of hatred that will yield more and more violence in the absence of peace.

Arabs are not only frustrated with the failure of the Council earlier this year to pronounce itself on the illegality of all Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, but they are also outraged that, two years after the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), Israel continues its illegal and immoral blockade of the Gaza Strip and its repeated attacks against its civilian population. It is the duty of the Council to compel Israel to abide by its responsibilities under international law and international humanitarian law, as well as Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, to protect the civilians of Gaza and those throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

What we are witnessing today is how the Israeli Government continues to choose the expansion of settlements over peace. In doing so, it is also deliberately choosing to block the United States-lead peace efforts, rather than to help them succeed. Above all, it is knowingly choosing to continue to defy international law and the will of the international community, as expressed by all the main organs of the United Nations, namely, this Council, the General Assembly and the International Court of justice.

Settlement-building is certainly not a trivial issue, as the Prime Minister of Israel said. In fact, in addition to evictions and house demolitions, residency revocations and land confiscations, settlement-building is part of a campaign that is eating up Palestinian land

and seeks to change the identity and legal status of East Jerusalem.

We are extremely concerned at and disappointed by the postponement of the Quartet meeting initially scheduled for 14 March, and later rescheduled for 15 April but again postponed. In spite of our strong reservations at the manner in which Israel dealt with the previously planned separate meetings of the Quartet with the parties, we continue to support the Quartet and believe that it must adopt and clearly spell out the well-known parameters for the resolution of the conflict, in particular the 1967 lines as the basis of the Palestinian State.

The Quartet should further set a clear timetable up to August 2011 for negotiations on the final status issues and ensure that the goal of a free and independent Palestinian State with full membership in the United Nations is realized by September of this year.

In contrast, such interim approaches as the idea of a provisional arrangement, short of a two-State solution and even without Palestinian agreement, are now clearly inconclusive and completely unacceptable 20 years after the Madrid Peace Conference, 18 years after the Oslo interim accords and eight years after the Road Map.

On the question of Palestinian statehood, let me, like Mr. Pascoe, underline that in its report to the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians in Brussels on 13 April, entitled "Palestinian State-building: a decisive period", the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process concluded that

> "in the limited territory under its control and within the constraints on the ground imposed by unresolved political issues, the Palestinian Authority has accelerated progress in improving its governmental functions".

In the areas enumerated by Mr. Pascoe where the United Nations is most engaged, the same report confirmed that "governmental functions are now sufficient for a functioning Government of a State".

However, the report adds:

> "Despite the progress achieved, the key constraints to the existence and successful functioning of the institutions of a potential State of Palestine arise primarily from the persistence of occupation and the unresolved issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ... [M]easures of occupation which stifle Palestinian life [need to be] fundamentally rolled back ... It is vitally important that the State-building and political processes be brought into alignment by September 2011."

In turn, the World Bank, in its 13 April economic monitoring report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, reiterates:

> "The World Bank has noted in previous reports to meetings of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) that if the Palestinian Authority (PA) maintains its performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future."

The report concludes:

> "Since the last AHLC meeting, the PA has continued to strengthen its institutions, delivering public services and promoting reforms that many existing States struggle with."

Finally, let me quote from the International Monetary Fund staff report "Macroeconomic and Fiscal Framework for the West Bank and Gaza", submitted to the same Brussels meeting. It considers that:

> "The Palestinian Authority (PA) is now able to conduct the sound economic policies expected of a future well-functioning Palestinian State, given its solid track record in reforms and institution-building in the public finance and financial areas. Steady reforms in the public finance management system have enabled the PA to tightly control expenditures, apply rigorous budget preparation and execution practices, and establish fiscal transparency and accountability in line with international standards."

In that regard, a Security Council trip to the Middle East would not only assert the role of this Council in the peace process and its responsibility towards international peace and security, but also offer all members of the Council the opportunity to have a first-hand and on-the-ground assessment of the Government functions carried out by the Palestinian institutions and to judge how sufficient they have become for a functioning Government of a State.

The Arab world is witnessing an unprecedented momentum for change. People across the region are now voicing their aspirations to freedom, dignity and a better life. However, let us keep in mind that the greatest source of frustration in our region remains the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict and the historic injustice to the Palestinian people.

A lasting peace in our part of the world needs to be a comprehensive and just peace. Accordingly, it will also require that Israel fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the remaining occupied parts of southern Lebanon.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing.

Over the past few months, we have witnessed seismic shifts across the Middle East. There have been tragic events, the loss of innocent lives and Governments' brutal repression of aspirations to change. However, there has also been the inspirational determination of people to struggle for their universal rights against seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The key lesson has been that people's aspiration to freedom cannot be crushed. The only credible answer to legitimate popular demands is sustainable reform.

As we speak, events continue to unfold across the region, including in Yemen and Syria. We unequivocally condemn the violence against and, indeed, the killing of peaceful demonstrators by the security forces of both countries. Both Governments must respect the right to peaceful protest and free speech, address the legitimate aspirations of the protesters, bring forward the reforms that have been promised by Presidents Saleh and Al-Assad, and ensure that those reforms mark the start of a sustainable transition to new political systems that meet the aspirations of their people.

Such events in the wider Middle East are relevant to the efforts to find a long-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Just as populations in the region are finding their voices and, in some cases, winning their rights, Palestinians, too, must realize their goal for a viable independent State of Palestine. It would be a great shame and, indeed, a source of continued instability if the hopes of the Palestinian people were left unfulfilled while the region is transformed around them.

It is therefore crucial that urgent progress in the peace process be made. We are fast approaching September, which is the time frame set out by President Obama and the Quartet to welcome Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations, and the month that will mark the completion of the Palestinian Authority's State-building programme. If progress is to be made, the current impasse must be broken. The parties should commit to a new phase of direct negotiations. In order for negotiations to be credible, they must be based on a clearly articulated set of parameters that are well known to us all: two States based on the 1967 borders with equivalent land swaps; security arrangements that protect Palestinian sovereignty, while also providing sufficient assurance to Israel; Jerusalem as the capital of both States; and a just solution for refugees.

For there to be credible progress, the leaders of both parties must do more to narrow the gulf between them and to counter the growing lack of trust. I would highlight three points.

First, they must do more to avoid violence, strengthen accountability, reduce tensions and avoid further loss of innocent lives. The recent escalation in violence is of great concern and only serves to widen the gulf between Palestinians and Israelis. The surge in rocket attacks from Gaza that have injured Israeli citizens has to stop. Those responsible for the recent attacks on a Jerusalem bus station and an Israeli school bus must be brought to justice. Israel has a right to defend its citizens, but it must take care to avoid civilian casualties. As we have heard, action in Gaza over the past month has killed 18 civilians, including four children.

Secondly, settlement activity, which has continued apace in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, must stop. It is illegal and undermines trust and the prospects for peace. We condemn Israel's decision to approve more than 900 settlement units in Gilo and the retrospective approval for construction in five West Bank settlements. The Israeli authorities should reconsider their decisions.

Thirdly, there needs to be improved access to Gaza. Its isolation only breeds radicalism, extremism and violence. However, the answer is not more flotillas, which are likely only to provoke violence and do not provide a solution. Israel must speed up the approvals process for international projects and move forward with the proposal of the Office of the Quartet Representative for imports of construction materials by private companies.

Skepticism about the prospects for peace in the Middle East is not in short supply, but it is incumbent upon both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to look beyond immediate obstacles, to rise above domestic pressures and to give their people a sense of optimism for the future. As I said at the start, the lesson of the past months across the Middle East has been that people's demands cannot be crushed. Each country in the region faces a unique set of circumstances, but at the very core of all the protests has been a desire for basic freedoms. Those aspirations must be met. That is as true for Palestinians as it is for Libyans, Tunisians, Egyptians, Yemenis or Syrians.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): First of all, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing, even if it was a particularly sombre one.

Dramatic events in the region are quickly changing the face of the Middle East, presenting its people with tremendous challenges but also with far-reaching opportunities. The one and only way to address such daunting challenges is through dialogue and reform.

Portugal unequivocally condemns the use of force against peaceful demonstrations. We are concerned by increasing levels of violence in a number of countries in the region and deplore the many deaths it has caused. We urge all parties to exercise the utmost restraint. We are particularly worried and shocked by the number of children falling victim to this violence, as reported by UNICEF, and call upon all parties to protect children from direct and indirect effects of violence. Violence and repression can never be the answer. Only genuine comprehensive and inclusive dialogue will allow the important issues at stake to be addressed and solved in a peaceful and sustainable way that meets the legitimate aspirations expressed by peoples in several countries.

The winds of change sweeping through the Middle East render progress on the Arab-Israeli peace process all the more pressing. The status quo is simply not sustainable. The absence of a timely comprehensive settlement will only further undermine confidence, exacerbate tensions and propitiate more violence.

At the core of this regional conflict is the six-decade-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbours will remain elusive in the absence of an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. Decisive action and strong political will are needed to relaunch negotiations and bring them to a meaningful conclusion. As the Under-Secretary-General recalled, violence is yet again on the rise in the region.

Portugal vehemently condemns the heinous killing of a settler family in Itamar and the fatal terrorist attack in East Jerusalem last month. The perpetrators of such odious crimes must be brought to justice and held accountable for their acts. We are also concerned by the rising violence between settlers and Palestinians. Unjustifiable actions cannot be redeemed by vindictive retaliation taken against innocent individuals.

Violence in and around Gaza also continues to escalate. Only last week, an Italian human rights activist was brutally murdered. Portugal unequivocally condemns the indiscriminate firing of mortars and rockets by militant groups in Gaza and calls for their immediate halt. The targeting of an obvious civilian objective such as a school bus merits absolute condemnation.

We recognize Israel's right to self-defence, consistent with international law and international humanitarian law. But we also urge it to use maximum restraint and ensure that civilians are not endangered. Attacks on civilians are completely unacceptable in any circumstances. We appeal to all parties to act responsibly and avoid further and very dangerous escalation.

We also note with concern the continued captivity of Staff Sergeant Shalit and call for his immediate release. It is unacceptable that he continues to be detained and denied access in violation of humanitarian law and practice.

Portugal welcomes the positive steps taken by the Government of Israel concerning the easing of the closure of Gaza. Nevertheless, as stated by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee last week,

> "more is needed for a fundamental change of the situation in the Gaza Strip. A lasting recovery will require a removal of the ban on exports and private sector imports of investment inputs, as

well as lifting restrictions on the legitimate passage of people".

Likewise, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains one of great concern. We thus reiterate our call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). It is in the interest of everyone, and particularly of Israel, not to reinforce extremism or foster a more broadly radicalized environment in Gaza.

Once again, we join the international community in appealing to Israel to cease all settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These settlement activities, including natural growth, are illegal under international law. They undermine trust between the parties, erode the prerequisites for a two-State solution and constitute an obstacle to peace.

It is thus unacceptable that settlement construction proceeds unabated and that plans for its extension continue to be announced regularly. Also, regrettably, evictions and demolitions continue to render Palestinians homeless throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, depriving many families of their livelihoods. Likewise, an increasing number of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem have been denied their right to live in the city.

Reuniting the West Bank and Gaza also remains an important objective. Portugal fully supports the efforts of President Abbas in favour of Palestinian reconciliation within the framework of the Palestinian Authority and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Let me reiterate what I have often said here. Portugal condemns all actions that undermine trust and opposes all unilateral actions that prejudge the outcome of negotiations on final status issues, including Jerusalem. On the contrary, it is by building trust and building on trust that Israelis and Palestinians will be able to settle their differences and ensure a lasting and comprehensive peace.

The foregoing brings me to the crux of our concern. Peace between Israelis and Palestinians can be reached only through a direct, genuine and politically negotiated process leading to the establishment of a Palestinian State. The dual deadline for reaching an Israeli-Palestinian agreement on permanent status issues and completing the Palestinian two-year State-building plan is fast approaching. Yet, the negotiations process is at a standstill. The Quartet was due to meet in March. The April meeting was again postponed. Portugal wishes for a new meeting to be scheduled as soon as possible and encourages the active involvement of the Quartet to bring the negotiations process forward.

It is essential that the international community clearly set out the parameters of a peace agreement and a clear calendar to attain this objective. As underscored by the four European Union countries in the Security Council in their explanations of vote on 18 February, when we voted on the draft resolution on settlements (see S/PV.6484), direct negotiations should seek to achieve, first, an agreement on the borders of the two States based on the 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties; secondly, security arrangements that respect the sovereignty of the Palestinians, end the occupation and protect Israel's security; thirdly, a just solution to the refugee question; and lastly, the fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem, solving through negotiations the status of the city as the future capital of both States. That is also the position of the European Union, which will be expressed later on in this debate.

At the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in Brussels last week, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations concurred that the Palestinian Authority is above the threshold for a functioning State in a number of key sectors, and is close to reaching the objectives of the State-building programme. Nevertheless, the Palestinian Authority's institution-building achievements can be sustainable only if they are matched with progress in the peace talks. Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas set for themselves the goal of reaching a framework agreement on all core issues by September. It is vitally important that by then the State-building and political process be brought into alignment. We thus again urge the parties to resume with the utmost urgency meaningful direct negotiations.

While we welcome all the measures aimed at supporting the Palestinian Authority State-building exercise and the economic development of the occupied Palestinian territory, those measures are not to be considered as a substitute for timely negotiations on all final status issues. Likewise, as events all throughout the region are showing us, temporary and interim solutions are simply not an option, either.

The peace we all hope for in the Middle East is a lasting and comprehensive one that would enable the full integration of Israel into its regional environment. A breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, would contribute to appease a region in turmoil. The Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon tracks are equally important and need to be pursued in tandem.

The region is living through times of change. Israelis and Palestinians must seize this opportunity to engage diligently and fruitfully with each other. Now is the moment for bold and brave leadership to focus on the only solution that can bring sustainable peace and prosperity to Israelis and Palestinians alike: an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

I would like to say a few words on the situation in Lebanon. Portugal hopes for the formation of a new Government in keeping with the provisions of the Constitution. We expect a new Government, once formed, to fulfil its obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004), and to reiterate its commitment to all international obligations, including those concerning the Special Tribunal.

We remain concerned by the almost daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty by Israeli overflights of Lebanon, which exacerbate tensions in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon area of operations. Portugal reaffirms its full support for Lebanon's sovereignty and independence and the need for its sovereignty to be fully respected in land, sea and air.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing. I, too, have listened carefully to the statements made by the Permanent Observer of Palestine and the representative of Israel. China has always advocated for the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by political diplomatic means on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Middle East Road Map for peace. The ultimate goal is to establish an independent Palestinian State, with full sovereignty and living side by side with Israel in peace.

At present, the Israeli-Palestinian talks are at a standstill. China opposes Israel's settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, which are not conducive to breaking the deadlock or to establishing mutual political trust. We hope that Israel will exercise restraint and caution, and adopt practical measures to create conditions conducive to the early resumption of the talks between the two sides.

China is deeply concerned about the escalating tension in the Gaza Strip. China hopes that the parties will effectively honour the ceasefire commitments they made recently, exercise restraint, refrain from unilateral and provocative actions and avoid unnecessary innocent civilian casualties so as to stabilize the situation and restore calm on the ground.

Without progress, the Middle East peace process will suffer setbacks. In the face of increasing difficulties, the international community should be more coordinated and united as it steps up its efforts to promote peace talks and spare no effort to promote the resumption of talks between Israel and Palestine as soon as possible and to secure the advancement of the peace process.

We hope that the Quartet will play an active role in finding a solution that can break the impasse in the Middle East. At this critical juncture, China supports a greater role for the Security Council in finding a solution to the question of the Middle East.

Peace talks on other tracks, including the Lebanon-Israel and Syria-Israel tracks, should also be promoted in parallel. All of the parties concerned should seek to create conditions conducive to a resumption of dialogue and negotiations and to bringing the prolonged confrontation and tension in the region to an end.

China has always supported the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national rights and has provided assistance, within its abilities, to help ease the suffering of the Palestinian people and assist them in their State-building efforts. China supports all efforts aimed at facilitating the Middle East peace process and will continue to play a positive and constructive role in promoting the achievement of a comprehensive, lasting and just peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Amieyeofori (Nigeria): I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, for his comprehensive briefing.

For more than two decades, the Middle East peace process has been mediated diligently by the international community. Undoubtedly, the process has been characterized by rigorous negotiations, hints of progress and compromise, followed by seemingly intractable political stalemates. With the failure of the parties to resume direct negotiations, we are witnessing another moment of uncertainty. The parties must now demonstrate their undivided commitment to peace and remove all impediments to the resumption of direct negotiations to resolve the outstanding permanent status issues.

While it is regrettable that the meeting of the Quartet scheduled for this month failed to take place, we welcome the prospect of new proposals by the United States and Israeli authorities to re-open the stalled talks. We believe, however, that the Quartet Road Map offers a viable pathway to peace and progress. The parties should embrace it as a basis for substantive engagement towards the creation of an independent Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside Israel by the end of this year. This goal will be difficult to achieve if the vicious cycle of violence, attacks and reprisals continues in the region.

However, there are a number of specific actions that are certain to foster mutual respect and compromise, build confidence, and pave the way for the realization of the two-State solution. In this regard, we encourage Israel to take concrete steps to freeze all settlement-related activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The planned construction of new settler homes will provide fodder for resentment and increased violence. In the same vein, military incursions into Gaza and retaliation for militant attacks are unhelpful to the peace process.

Palestinian leaders must signal their readiness to return to the negotiating table by making enhanced efforts to forge unity and deal with militancy and other internal security challenges. It is beyond doubt that neither military might nor militancy will resolve the protracted conflict. We therefore reiterate our condemnation of recent rocket attacks on southern Israel by Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, and call for maximum restraint from both sides.

A prisoner-exchange programme between the two sides at this point in time would no doubt ease tensions and build trust, as would the unconditional release of Gilad Shalit after more than five years in detention.

The key lesson we must draw from the tragic events of 31 May 2010 is that confrontation must be avoided in the future delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. While we commend Israel for further easing the blockade on Gaza, we stress its obligation to provide unhindered access for humanitarian and other goods into Gaza. At the same time, we urge the people of Gaza to utilize only legitimate channels to transport persons, goods and materials out of the territory in order to address Israel's legitimate security concerns. In this regard, we note the positive role the Palestinian Authority is playing in addressing Israel's security concerns.

The fragile security situations in North Africa and parts of the Middle East present challenges and fresh opportunities that demand renewed vigilance and commitment to peace by all stakeholders. It is in that regard that we welcome the proposal by the Russian delegation for a visit to the Middle East at an appropriate time and believe that this will further strengthen our collective resolve for peace in the Middle East, even as we are optimistic that, with our collective engagement, the vision of statehood can be achieved before the end of the year.

With regard to Lebanon, we support its sovereignty and territorial integrity and urge the new Government to remain steadfast in the implementation of its international obligations, including resolution 1701 (2006). In that connection, we welcome the Government's pledge to assist the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and restore regional peace and security in line with that resolution. We urge Israel to halt further incursions into Lebanese territory to avoid an escalation of violence. We also stress the importance of maintaining calm along the Blue Line.

On the Golan Heights, we encourage Israel and Syria to seek a mutually acceptable solution. We underscore the need for all parties to engage in fruitful dialogue and longer-term political reconciliation, even in the face of provocations.

Finally, by acting together to build confidence, the search for peace will be significantly enhanced. In words and deeds, the parties should demonstrate a strong desire to re-engage in a negotiated settlement of all the core issues of the conflict.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his update on recent developments in the Middle East. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their presence and their contribution to our debate.

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be concerned about the absence of any progress in the Middle East peace process. We strongly believe that time is not on the side of the parties concerned and fear that the prolonged impasse is making the necessary positive breakthrough more difficult.

Our concerns are further heightened by reports of the latest escalation in violence, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms. We fully concur with the Secretary-General's call for respect for international humanitarian law, de-escalation and calm to prevent any further bloodshed.

We cannot but underscore the fact that the scheduled time frame for the conclusion of peace negotiations is rapidly approaching, while the Israelis and Palestinians appear to be no closer to even the resumption of direct talks. In such circumstances, it is perfectly clear that urgent, bold and responsible moves are needed in order to end the ongoing erosion in the Middle East peace process.

We would like to recall that it is also the responsibility of the Security Council, the Quartet, the League of Arab States and other international and regional actors to help the parties transform this deplorable state of affairs into a politically sustainable negotiating process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is deeply disappointed by the approval of 942 new housing units in Israel's settlement in Gilo, East Jerusalem, and the upcoming plans for new settlements. We reiterate that all settlement activities on occupied land are illegal under international law and contrary to Israel's obligations under the Road Map. These activities therefore represent an obstacle on the road to comprehensive peace. Bosnia and Herzegovina calls upon Israel to respond positively to appeals by the international community and end all settlement activities in occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina does not recognize the annexation of East Jerusalem, and underlines that the status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties.

I would like to stress once again that, for my country, any act of violence against civilians is unacceptable, wherever it originates. We would also like to reiterate that civilian populations must be protected. All violence must stop immediately, in particular terrorist attacks and mortar and rocket fire. Therefore, we urge the parties to observe restraint and make every effort to avoid further escalation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that securing lasting peace and stability in the region of the Middle East is possible only through diplomatic efforts and full commitment to the peace process. We therefore urge both Israelis and Palestinians to immediately start the unconditional implementation of their obligations as stipulated by the relevant resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Road Map and the agreements previously reached by the parties, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative.

With regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009). Israeli security concerns, including a complete stop to all violence and arms smuggling into Gaza, must also be addressed.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain committed to the two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. In order to achieve this goal of fundamental interest to all parties in the Middle East, the Israelis and Palestinians have to make the decisions necessary to overcome this extremely worrisome impasse and return to direct talks without delay. Bosnia and Herzegovina urges them to do so.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing. I also thank the Permanent Representative of the State of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

France associates itself with the statement to be made by the head of the delegation of the European Union.

I would like to bring up the following points. The Council is today considering a peace process that is making no progress in a region that is experiencing a remarkable groundswell of popular will. Tunisia and Egypt are currently managing their post-revolutionary periods and, together with the European Union, we confirmed our full support to them during this demanding phase of democratic transition.

In Bahrain, we must encourage the resumption of dialogue so that the current difficulties can be overcome in the interests of all Bahrainis.

Other situations, namely, in Yemen and Syria, are also of concern to us. We call for the necessary respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We support the mediation efforts carried out by the Gulf Cooperation Council. We call on all Yemeni parties to immediately begin a constructive dialogue under its auspices, leading to a peaceful political transition.

In Syria, the authorities must renounce the use of force against demonstrators and translate into facts, without further delay, the announced reforms, especially the lifting of the state of emergency, in order to respond to the aspirations of the population. The end of repression, the release of all political prisoners and respect for the right to peacefully demonstrate and for the freedom of the press must be implemented. Arrests must be stopped and light must be shed on recent events. An inclusive political dialogue should take place for effective political reforms that will respond to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, thereby contributing to the country's stability.

In Libya, we call on the international community, especially the Tripoli regime, to respect Security Council resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011). Until there is respect for a genuine, verifiable and lasting ceasefire that meets the requirements of the international community, the coalition will continue its actions aimed at protecting the civilian population and ensuring respect for the no-fly zone and the arms embargo. We welcome the role played by the Secretary-General and the United Nations to ensure that everywhere, dialogue and respect for fundamental freedoms prevail over violence.

The aspirations of the Palestinian people to a viable, sovereign State living in peace and security side by side with Israel are no less legitimate than the concerns expressed throughout the region. We must respond to those aspirations and to those of the Israeli people to regional security and integrity.

France believes that there can be no alternative to a negotiated solution to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is why for several months now we have been advocating that the Quartet endorse the parameters we defined in this very Chamber on 18 February, so that direct negotiations can resume between the parties on that basis with respect to all final-status-related questions. The postponement once again of the Quartet meeting, which we deplore, will not help us to draw closer to that goal. Quartet envoys will meet on 5 May; they must work to ensure that a meeting of principals is held as soon as possible.

A long-lasting impasse in the peace process could jeopardize the credibility of the two-State solution and lead to a deterioration of the situation on the ground. France remains determined to see that significant progress is made before the September 2011 deadline set by the Quartet.

The recognition of a State of Palestine is one of the options that France is considering, together with its European partners, with the goal of creating political prospects conducive to a resumption of the peace process. If we were to adopt this solution, it should encourage the resumption of negotiations on the basis of internationally known parameters. The reaffirmation of our unwavering support for the State of Israel is paired with a clear political message aimed at dissuading both parties from pursuing unilateral strategies or imposing faits accomplis on the ground that would hinder our efforts to achieve peace.

In that connection, our stance on settlements is a consistent one: settlements are illegal under international law; they undermine confidence between the parties; and they pose a threat to the two-State solution. It is for that reason that, subsequently to the open debate held in February (see S/PV.6470), we voted in favour of the draft resolution submitted to the Council. We call on Israel to abandon any further construction activities, which are to be reviewed shortly.

We have taken note of the announcement that a speech will be made by President Obama and a diplomatic initiative undertaken by the Israeli Prime

Minister, to be presented to the United States Congress on 24 May. We do not know the terms of those initiatives, but we are, of course, prepared to support any effort aimed at relaunching a dynamic involving direct negotiations. Any proposal targeted at advancing the peace process must be based on a set of credible parameters that will make it possible to overcome the crisis of confidence between the parties.

Eighteen years after the launch of the Oslo peace process, we no longer have time to consider new, interim solutions. Measures aimed at improving the situation on the ground are welcome, but they cannot be an end in and of themselves; they must be linked to prospects for a definitive solution and cannot substitute for it.

If we do not respond to the aspirations for peace expressed by the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, the recent upsurge of violence in Gaza makes clear that there is a risk of a flare-up. We condemn the Itamar assassination and the firing of rockets, missiles and shells at the civilian population in the south of Israel. We call for respect for international humanitarian law in the case of Gilad Shalit. The firing of an anti-tank missile at an Israeli school bus marked a new stage in the violence. We also condemn the humanitarian consequences of the Israeli operations undertaken in response to those attacks, which led to several civilian deaths in the Gaza Strip. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) offers a suitable framework for the implementation of a durable truce, for which we call.

We continue to call for the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) in all its aspects, especially in connection with the need to lift the blockade and the provision of access for humanitarian goods to the territory, which should take place through existing channels established by the Israeli authorities.

In Gaza, too, we must respond to the aspirations of the people through a fundamental change of policy without compromising Israel's legitimate security concerns. It is imperative that the measures aimed at easing the blockade, which were put in place in June 2010, be implemented, including with respect to the authorization of exports of commercial goods and the liberalization of conditions for the movement of individuals. The people of Gaza have also expressed their desire for Palestinian unity, and we wish to affirm our support for President Abbas in his efforts to respond.

In this very volatile context, we cannot overlook the regional aspect of the peace process. In Lebanon, we hope that the parties will show restraint and continue to cooperate, in the framework of the Tripartite Commission, in order to avert any problems along the Blue Line. A new Government has not yet been formed, but the Lebanese authorities must respect all of the country's international obligations, especially those related to the Special Tribunal and resolution 1701 (2006).

In conclusion, I wish once again to stress the international community's pressing obligation not to allow this impasse, which has lasted more than seven months, to continue. The conclusions of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians have strengthened our conviction that the Palestinians are more than ever prepared to establish their State and to administer it in a credible and responsible manner. To let the stalemate continue without responding to the expectations raised by the prospects offered by September 2011 — prospects that were underlined by President Obama — would be to undermine the only tangible asset towards the creation of a Palestinian State — the Fayyad plan. To consolidate the gains made, in June France will organize a donor conference for the State of Palestine. However, that exercise will be a meaningful one only if it is linked to the indispensable resumption of the political process, the conditions for which I recalled earlier.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing.

Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of the European Union.

Members of the Council, whenever they were meeting on the situation in the Middle East in recent months, were entirely in agreement on the urgency of making progress in the Middle East peace process. With little more than four months to go until September, this sense of urgency is growing considerably. Every day that passes without the re-establishment of a credible political process is a lost day. We must not allow this to continue; risks are growing, and chances are dwindling. We must overcome the deadlock and re-establish a credible political process, well in advance of the September deadlines.

We want to see the State of Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. There is no alternative to the two-State solution. Making decisive progress by September is possible, and the window of opportunity is still open.

Negotiations are the only viable way forward. The international community must set a framework. We remain convinced that clear parameters are a prerequisite if negotiations are to be successful. Germany set out its view on parameters along with the United Kingdom and France on 18 February in the Council (see S/PV.6484), supported by EU member States and many others. We call on the Quartet to work in this direction and to bring about the progress required prior to the September deadline it has itself endorsed. Within this context, we look forward to the speech President Obama will deliver on the region. Strong United States leadership is required.

The parties must commit unequivocally to returning to meaningful direct negotiations on this basis as soon as possible and without setting additional conditions. We call on President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu to show flexibility and, within this context, on the Prime Minister to open a forward-looking perspective in his address to Congress.

Germany remains strongly opposed to unilateral action impacting on final status issues, whether from the Palestinian or from the Israeli side. Seeking statehood through unilateral steps will not bring sustainable peace. Israeli settlement activity should cease immediately. It is illegal under international law, constitutes an obstacle to peace and threatens to make a two-State solution impossible. New construction plans should be abandoned. All members of the Council are in agreement that continued settlement activity seriously threatens the prospects for peace.

Gaza remains a serious concern. Developments over the past two weeks have demonstrated once again the fragility of the current situation. A ceasefire agreed on 14 April held for only three days. Germany strongly condemns the continued firing of rockets and mortars into Israeli territory, in particular the targeting of a school bus with an anti-tank missile. This type of action is utterly unacceptable. Germany recognizes Israel's right to protect its citizens against attacks. At the same time, we look to Israel to exercise this right judiciously. The loss of civilian lives in Gaza is deeply regrettable. Further escalation must be prevented.

We continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, who has been held hostage for almost five years now.

We would like to express our concern with regard to a possible second Gaza flotilla. The planned activities bear considerable potential for escalation. In line with what was said by Lynn Pascoe earlier, we call on the organizations involved to find other ways to deliver aid to the people of Gaza. The appropriate way ahead is the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) calling for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for goods and people to and from Gaza, and for the prevention of the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition. In this context, we call on all international supporters to make use of the existing land crossings to channel their support to Gaza, and to abstain from provocations.

Despite the concerns to which I have referred, there is some positive news as well. On 13 April, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians met and acknowledged the Palestinian Authority's State-building efforts, stating that the Authority is above the threshold for a functioning State in the key sectors. Germany has been a major donor to the Palestinian Authority, nationally and through the EU. We have made a major political and financial investment in Palestinian State-building. This investment has been made to achieve a two-State solution and sustainable peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

For too long, the people of the Middle East have suffered from conflict and confrontation. It is time to reach a final and comprehensive settlement that will resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and end the occupation that began in 1967. The status quo is not sustainable. Our goal remains a framework agreement on all final status issues by September. Germany will contribute to achieving this goal.

The deteriorating situation in Syria, violence across that country and the rising death toll remain of serious concern. We condemn the use of force by security forces against peaceful demonstrators, and call on Syria to address the legitimate demands of the Syrian people by urgently implementing a credible programme of political reforms as a path to long-term stability. We acknowledge the Syrian Government's announcements of reforms, including the lifting of the state of emergency today through decree No. 161. If fully and swiftly implemented, it could be a first step in a wider programme of necessary reforms.

In Yemen, the protests against the Government of President Saleh have risen sharply in number and strength since their onset in January 2011. The security situation, in particular, and continued news of violence coming from many Yemeni cities continue to give rise to great concern. Despite a wide range of efforts, also by members of the international community, we are facing an intractable political impasse that has put the country at the brink of a political and economic tragedy. We call on the Government of Yemen to abide by its responsibility to respect and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, including their freedom of expression, to ensure safety and to prevent further bloodshed. Likewise, the opposition should show restraint and its determination to engage in a peaceful dialogue about Yemen's future.

It must be clear to all parties concerned that Yemen's problems cannot be solved with violence. The future of the country has to be laid out by a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue and courageous reforms. We fully support the mediation efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council in this regard. All Yemeni actors are called upon to engage in these negotiations towards a peaceful future for the Yemeni people.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I also thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine and the Permanent Representative of Israel for their statements.

I begin by expressing profound sorrow over the loss of innocent life in the recent escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. The death of a 16-year-old Israeli boy in an attack on a school bus and the killings of civilians — including children — as a result of Israeli reprisals against militants in the Gaza Strip are appalling. We were also dismayed by the killing of Italian peace activist Vittorio Arrigoni by extremists in Gaza. Brazil condemns these heinous attacks in the strongest terms. Violence by settlers and against settlers has reached shocking levels. All involved in such acts must be brought to justice. All parties must respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law and protect civilians.

All this has occurred as the stalemate in the peace process regrettably persists in spite of broad consensus on the urgent need for concrete decisions. Brazil was deeply disappointed at the new postponement of the Quartet's meeting. Unfortunately, this lack of movement creates a void in which radicals thrive.

That is why we continue to advocate that this Council should play a greater role in support of the peace process. We also welcome the proposal for a Security Council mission to the region. Twenty years after Madrid, 18 years after Oslo, and eight years since the Road Map, the painful cost of the absence of progress is more visible than ever. It is time for bold decisions that set forth the well-known parameters of an agreement on all final status issues.

It is unfortunate that illegal settlement activity is continuing. This logic further distances the political discourse from reality as regards the two-State solution. We fail to see how such a policy can advance the security concerns of Israel and its citizens, whose legitimacy we fully recognize and seek to advance. Settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is illegal and an obstacle to peace. It has become the single most serious threat to the two-State solution and to the prospects for peace. It stands in defiance of international law and the very set of international norms and institutions that serve the purpose of protecting civilians, including in Israel. It runs counter to the decisions of the Security Council and threatens the viability of the future Palestinian State.

We welcome the report submitted to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee last week by the Special Coordinator for the Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry, on the progress of the State-building efforts carried out by the Palestinian Authority. We commend the Palestinian Authority on the remarkable achievements in all areas of its State-building programme in a manner consistent with the goal of establishing the functioning institutions of the Palestinian State by this fall. Such achievement must be reinforced with concrete steps in the peace negotiations.

The situation in Gaza remains a source of grave concern. We welcome the implementation of measures by Israel aimed at alleviating the suffering of the population, specially the approval of United Nations projects at a higher rate. These are positives steps, although access to basic goods and services remains vastly insufficient. The lifting of the blockade is urgently required, as called for in resolution 1860 (2009).

The historic events and changes taking place in the broader Middle East are a natural expression of legitimate aspirations for political and economic progress and social justice. We support those aspirations. It is also natural that those events, coming from within, run different courses in different national contexts. Principles and values, nevertheless, apply across the board. As a matter of coherence, the international community cannot tolerate violence against unarmed civilians, regardless of where it is committed.

At the same time, we call on leaders facing peaceful demonstrations to uphold basic freedoms and to engage in meaningful dialogue towards needed reforms. Statesmanship, broad vision and political will are essential to addressing the legitimate demands of the respective populations in an environment of peace and stability.

Let me say a word on the situation in Lebanon. We look forward to the formation of a new Government in a process that runs its course in a peaceful manner and in line with the constitutional framework. A democratic, prosperous, stable and sovereign Lebanon will continue to be a fundamental dimension of peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Laher (South Africa): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing to the Council. My delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As we gather here today to consider the situation in the Middle East, we cannot ignore the uprisings that have engulfed the region and the Arab world in general. These developments have so far resulted in the fall of long-standing regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. The authorities in other countries in the region are being challenged by their populations. The international community will certainly gather some important lessons from this historic chapter. What is clear is that the status quo in which the rights of people have gone unfulfilled for decades cannot continue. In that light, the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be resolved. The two peoples deserve to live in peace and security.

The September deadline by which we hope to achieve a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State is almost upon us. Yet, the parties do not seem any nearer to returning to the negotiating table to achieve that goal. A return to negotiations by both sides is critical. However, Israel's continued disrespect for the decisions of the Security Council, and the United Nations in general, by continuing to build illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, remains an obstacle. These actions change facts on the ground and make agreement on final status issues much more difficult to achieve. The inability of the Council to adopt a resolution condemning such action despite the overwhelming support for it is unfortunate. We nonetheless call on Israel to respect the myriad resolutions adopted by the Council and immediately cease the construction of illegal settlements.

We had hoped that today's debate would have taken place after a meeting of the Quartet, whose outcome we had hoped would have been critical to the resumption of direct negotiations. We had expected the Quartet to take up its responsibility and draw parameters within which the parties could constructively engage. Those parameters essentially include an agreement on the borders of the two States based on the 4 June 1967 lines, security arrangements, a just, fair and agreed solution to the refugee question and the fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem. We urge the Quartet, of which we as the United Nations are an essential part, to convene soon to proceed on that basis.

Intra-Palestinian unity is essential to move the peace process forward. We encourage all efforts to achieve that important objective. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing negotiations between Fatah and Hamas and hope that they will yield a positive result. We also welcome the Palestinian announcement to hold elections before September.

South Africa welcomes the Palestinian institution-building efforts under the leadership of Prime Minister Fayyad. We urge the international community to continue to support those initiatives.

With regard to Gaza, we remain deeply concerned about Israel's continued blockade. The international community's demand that Israel end the illegal blockade that has exacerbated the suffering of ordinary civilians must be adhered to. The blockade and the restrictions being imposed are in violation of international humanitarian law, including article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as contrary to the will of the international community as expressed in resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1515 (2003) and 1860 (2009).

We reiterate the call for accountability for crimes committed during the 2008-2009 Gaza conflict. In that regard, in order to ensure justice, it is vital for the parties to implement the recommendations of the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48).

South Africa also stresses the urgency of reconstruction in Gaza. We call upon the international community to exert serious efforts to compel Israel to allow for the entry of all necessary construction materials for at least the repair of destroyed and damaged humanitarian infrastructure and United Nations facilities, including schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in order that dignity can be restored to the people of Gaza. We also stress the necessity of sustained commercial activity, including both imports and exports, to promote the economic recovery of livelihoods, businesses and industry in Gaza.

We condemn the recent attacks from both Gaza and southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of civilians, including school children. We urge the parties to exercise restrain and to refrain from using indiscriminate missile and other forms of air attacks, which further exacerbate tensions in the area and bring further untold suffering to ordinary civilians.

Israeli military attacks earlier this month on Gaza, which led to civilian deaths, should be condemned. We urge Israel to exercise restraint in defending itself, to ensure that its actions do not harm innocent civilians.

South Africa also joins those calling for the release of the Israeli Staff Sergeant, as well as the many Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli jails.

In conclusion, we believe that the current developments in the Arab world will undoubtedly have a bearing on the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. In our search for a solution to the Palestinian question, it is now clearer than ever that we must not lose sight of the broader regional question to which Palestine is inextricably linked. We therefore call on the Council and other stakeholders to accelerate efforts towards the holistic resolution of the Middle East crisis, including the Lebanese and Syrian tracks.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing on developments in the Middle East. We have listened attentively to the statements by the representatives of Palestine and Israel.

As the Middle East is going through an unprecedentedly intense and historic period, with problems that have accumulated over the years becoming more and more acute, the task of achieving a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement is especially pressing. To attempt to sidestep this fundamental issue of Middle Eastern politics would be a serious mistake. Unfortunately, instead of stepping up international efforts, which the Russian Federation has consistently called for, we have already seen the ministerial meeting of the members of the Quartet postponed twice — and this time to an as yet undetermined date. This is deeply disappointing, particularly since we and our partners had already done much preparatory work ahead of the meeting.

Today as never before, Israelis and Palestinians need international assistance to transcend their mutual mistrust, forge constructive dialogue on the familiar international legal foundations, and move towards a mutually acceptable two-State solution. The fundamental task of resuming negotiations has been further complicated by the fact that the frequent calls of the international community on the parties to reject unilateral action that prejudges a final settlement remain unheeded. Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This illegal practice must come to an end immediately.

The absence of any progress in diplomatic efforts creates a vacuum that heightened confrontation and a further build-up of mistrust threaten to fill. A sad confirmation of this was the escalation of violence around the Gaza Strip between 7 and 9 April, in which dozens of people died or were injured, at a level not seen since 2009. We strongly urge all sides to show restraint and to implement the provisions of resolution 1860 (2009). We support the complete lifting of the Gaza blockade. We recognize the importance of protecting the unhindered access of humanitarian assistance to and throughout the entire territory of

Gaza. However, we deem it important to avoid actions that could be perceived as provocations.

An additional factor exacerbating the situation in Gaza is the increased activity of radical groups. Like everyone here, we were shaken by the killing by extremists of the Italian human rights activist Vittorio Arrigoni. We urge Hamas, the controlling authority in Gaza, to do everything necessary to ensure security in the Strip. Abductions and assaults on individuals cannot be allowed to become daily political practice. We believe that, in the context of the creation of an independent, viable, sovereign Palestinian State with territorial integrity, overcoming the divisions within Palestinian ranks is of paramount importance. Russia has consistently called for such unity, which would lay the necessary foundation for substantive Palestinian-Israeli talks and future agreements.

Considering that September is only months away, it is incumbent on us to rekindle diplomatic efforts to find a way out of this explosive dead end. I would like to draw attention once more to the existence in the Security Council's arsenal of a powerful tool: sending missions to the region. In the current circumstances, the Russian proposal to send a Security Council mission to the Middle East is especially timely, since its goal is to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. I would also emphasize separately that the mission's task is not to blame anyone but to listen to the legitimate concerns of each side and attempt to find some common ground. We are grateful for the support voiced today for this initiative.

It is the Russian Federation's consistent belief that a complete, fair and lasting settlement in the Middle East is possible only with the inclusion of all settlement tracks: Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese.

Turning to events in Syria, we support the maintenance of law and order and the achievement of stability, internal consensus and social peace in that country in order to prevent unfavourable developments and casualties. That, as we see it, is the aim of the efforts of President Al-Assad to institute domestic reforms, including the lifting of the state of emergency. In that respect, we deem unacceptable any external interference in Syrian affairs or those of other States in the region.

We are hoping for a speedy conclusion to the process of forming a Government in Lebanon on the basis of a consensus that will incorporate the views of all Lebanese. It is important that this process take place within constitutional parameters. We expect the country's new Government to remain firmly committed to Lebanon's international obligations, and we urge both the Lebanese and Israeli sides to continue to work to implement the positions articulated in resolution 1701 (2006).

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): I would like to join other colleagues in thanking Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements, of which we have taken careful note.

The debate today has really been an extension of the Council's continuing attention to Palestine and related issues, and my remarks will basically focus on that.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be grim, with no sign of movement in peace talks. The expectation that the Quartet would meet on 15 April and come up with a statement that would enable Palestinians and Israelis to resume talks has again not materialized. The lack of progress in even holding talks is also contributing to an increase in violence.

And yet it is imperative that the hopes raised for a Palestinian State during the past two years not be lost. The State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority have received commendations from various quarters, including financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The April 2011 report of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process is the latest to endorse the achievements of the Palestinian Authority.

The report makes it amply clear that the progress made in the areas of the rule of law and human rights, livelihoods and productive sectors, education and culture, health, social protection, infrastructure and water are now sufficient for a functioning Government of a State. The Palestinian Authority has therefore shown its determination to persist with Prime Minister Fayyad's plan for achieving statehood. As we approach September 2011, these developments on the governance front should inject a sense of urgency into international efforts to resume peace talks.

The main hindrance to a resumption of peace talks is lack of mutual trust. Statements on the existence of Israel emanating from time to time from various sections of Palestinian society serve only to aggravate that lack of mutual trust. The perception that such statements, and the continuing rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip on Israel, increase Israel's vulnerability must be seen in this context. The recent spate of violence, including retaliation on Gaza after an attack on a school bus in southern Israel, clearly shows the divisions that exist. Such events deserve our strongest condemnation; we also condemn the killing of an abducted Italian national in Gaza last week.

While we commend the achievements in the territories administered by the Palestinian Authority, it is equally important to note the reason for the deplorable situation in Gaza, where even essentials are difficult to come by. The blockade of Gaza is adversely affecting its population, which barely has access to essential commodities. Gaza's access to such commodities is imperative, since the situation is also driving militant elements to vent their frustration through violence. Given the situation, humanitarian assistance to Gaza and its delivery should not be allowed to exacerbate the precarious security situation. It would be prudent to use established channels for delivering humanitarian assistance. At the same time, those channels must improve the efficacy of their delivery systems and look for stronger and more effective mechanisms for delivering humanitarian assistance.

We concur with the sense of the international community that freezing settlement activity in the Palestinian territories could enable the peace talks to resume. Lack of unity among Palestinian factions is another major issue. We note the recent initiatives aimed at promoting intra-Palestinian unity and hope they will result in a meaningful rapprochement among various Palestinian groups.

Equally important are other issues enmeshed in the conflict relating to Arab lands that remain under Israeli occupation. Progress in the Lebanese and Syrian tracks is core to achieving a comprehensive and durable peace in the region. In a region witnessing protest movements all around, a continuing impasse in the peace talks could have a destabilizing effect on a much larger area. If the peace talks do not recommence quickly, India fears that unilateral steps taken by the parties would only increase the distance between them and further complicate the situation. We therefore call on the Quartet members to intensify their collective and individual efforts to break the stalemate.

India has a long-standing tradition of solidarity with the Palestinian people. India has supported the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet Road Map and relevant Security Council resolutions.

India has been contributing to the capacity- and institution-building of the Palestinian people with its material and technical assistance programmes. India has also extended assistance through the India, Brazil and South Africa forum. India is also contributing $1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, continuing our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their pursuit of legitimate goals and their quest for development based on dignity and self-reliance.

In conclusion, let me quote from a letter our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru, wrote on 11 July 1947 to Albert Einstein.

> "I do not myself see how this problem can be resolved by violence and conflict on one side or the other. Even if such violence and conflict achieve certain ends for the moment, they must necessarily be temporary. I do earnestly hope that some kind of agreement might be arrived at between the Arabs and the Jews. I do not think even an outside power can impose its will for long or enforce some new arrangements against the will of the parties concerned."

These words were relevant more than 60 years ago. They are even more relevant now. Agreement must be reached between the parties through direct negotiations for it to endure. To that end, we hope that the parties will restart talks without further delay. Our expectation is that the talks would lead to a final and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict, in which several generations in the region have been mired. We all owe it to future generations that they do not remain mired in this conflict. We therefore reiterate our call to both sides to show a spirit of flexibility, compromise and political will to reach that end.

Mr. Onanga Ndiaye (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to begin by conveying its gratitude to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his very informative briefing. We also extend our gratitude to the Permanent Observer of Palestine and the Permanent Representative of Israel for their contributions.

Today's debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, takes place at a critical moment when popular movements shaking the region are leading to unpredictable results. The stream of events referred to by some as an Arab spring will require profound political, social, cultural and economic change throughout the region. Given these developments, new approaches must be considered taking into account this new momentum of transformation in this important part of the world, which has been affected for numerous decades by countless crises and conflicts. The fate of the peace process will be inextricably linked to the results of the protest demonstrations taking place throughout the region.

The September 2010 suspension of direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians due to a lack of agreement on stalemated issues has damaged the peace process. The continued settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, recent escalations of violence by both sides and the announced launching of new humanitarian flotillas to Gaza next month are, my delegation believes, detrimental to the international community's diplomatic efforts aimed at returning both parties to the negotiation table. Gabon remains concerned by the political stalemate. It is important that negotiations between the parties resume as quickly as possible under legitimate conditions conducive to enabling the international community's assistance in resolving the differences.

With respect to the vital issue of providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza, my country reiterates its call for the lifting of the blockade against Gaza in order to facilitate access for the civilian population to emergency assistance and economic development, which are so necessary to their survival and well-being.

My country considers it absolutely necessary that resolution 1860 (2009) be fully implemented in all its aspects to guarantee the right to access and freedom of movement in Gaza. Gabon calls upon all countries providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza to utilize existing channels in order to avoid any misunderstanding and thus to contribute to Israel's security and that of the population of Gaza.

Direct negotiations must resume based upon clear parameters that are equally mindful of Israel's security needs. In that regard, Gabon supports all recent diplomatic initiatives aimed at relaunching this process, and renews its call for the creation of a viable Palestinian State living peacefully side by side with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders.

My delegation also welcomes the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and expresses its full support for the United Nations following actions undertaken with the Palestinian authorities pursuant to the positive developments in the six areas necessary for the creation of a Palestinian State and, of course, for strengthening its State institutions.

On the political situation in Lebanon, Gabon is dismayed to note the impasse in negotiations to form a new Government. We encourage the new Prime Minister to leave no stone unturned in order to achieve consensus on this very important issue. Failure could risk serving as a pretext for the emergence of a new crisis that will carry the seeds of renewed violence, source of both instability and conflict. Similarly, my delegation believes that the effective implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) by both parties continues to be the sine qua non condition to guarantee a settlement of all the outstanding issues.

Given the positive progress seen at the diplomatic and economic levels of the process to build the Palestinian State, Gabon reiterates its support for the Quartet's efforts and urges it to convene a meeting as quickly as possible, during which this progress could be appropriately considered. Such a meeting would positively encourage both parties to return to the negotiation table and achieve a political solution before September.

In conclusion, my country believes that the overall situation in the Middle East is a source of renewed hope in the region. It is the responsibility of the international community to take into account the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the region, who want to seize this historic opportunity to take control of their own destinies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Colombia.

My delegation thanks Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his detailed briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. This is the moment to reiterate that the search for a peaceful and fair settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian situation requires a resolution on all core issues of the dispute, including security, strengthening Palestinian institutions, the definition of borders and settlements in the occupied territories. We therefore welcome what has been expressed by the Quartet — that, if the Palestinian Authority continues its institution-building process, it will be in a position to establish a State in the near future.

On the other hand, we regret that powerful existing tensions continue to cause civilian casualties, affecting the general population. We call on the parties to exercise restraint and do their utmost to bring to justice those responsible for those acts of destabilization.

My delegation urges all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and to take all necessary measures to protect civilians, especially children, from direct and indirect violence.

My delegation calls for the resumption of talks between the parties on the basis of mutual respect, recognition of the identity and rights of each people and the fulfilment of obligations under existing agreements recognized by both parties.

Colombia advocates a comprehensive solution to the unstable situation in the region and the cessation of the threat or use of force and of terrorism. Given the upheaval in the region, my country approaches this issue comprehensively and with a commitment to the lofty goals of international peace and security, as we have demonstrated on the many occasions when we have fulfilled our responsibilities within various United Nations bodies. We therefore support the Organization's efforts aimed at achieving real progress towards Palestinian unity and peace in the region. We must also take advantage of this renewed momentum and the winds of change blowing in the region, so as to provide an effective solution to this long-standing situation.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The stalemate in direct negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides undermines heartfelt and honest international efforts to achieve progress in the peace process. Peace and settlement policy do not go together. Settlement activity must be stopped in order to enable us to resume direct negotiations leading to the creation of two States, a Palestinian State and an Israeli State, based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State — two States living side by side in accordance with international resolutions and international terms of reference, especially resolutions adopted by the Security Council, as well as the important Arab Peace Initiative.

The Palestinian Authority is, deploying every possible means to fulfil its commitments under the Oslo Accord and the Road Map. However, we see no genuine palpable will or commitment on Israel's part to achieve a political settlement. That stands to undermine what has been achieved to date by the Palestinian Authority in its ambitious plans to build the institutions of a future State. Israel's intransigence in its wish to prevent Palestine from becoming a full Member of the United Nations in the coming session was referred to by President Obama in his address to the General Assembly (see A/65/PV.11). No one can accept the Palestinian people remaining without a State. Peace and security for both peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, is necessary, but Israel's obstinate policy hampers peace and leads to further escalation of the situation in the region.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on the Quartet and the Security Council to act quickly to persuade Israel to immediately put an end to its settlement policy, to resume direct negotiations and to find a comprehensive, peaceful, just and lasting solution, because the question of Palestine is an international question, not a regional one, and resolving it will benefit all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6520 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6520th meeting

Thursday, 21 April 2011, 3.20 p.m.
New York

***President*:**	**Mr. Alzate**	**(Colombia)**
***Members*:**	**Bosnia and Herzegovina**	**Mr. Vukašinović**
	Brazil	**Mr. Fernandes**
	China	**Mr. Sun Xiaobo**
	France	**Mr. Bonne**
	Gabon	**Mrs. Ntyam-Ehya**
	Germany	**Mr. Tillmann**
	India	**Mr. Kumar**
	Lebanon	**Mr. Khachab**
	Nigeria	**Mr. Edokpa**
	Portugal	**Ms. Cortes Palma**
	Russian Federation	**Mr. Pankin**
	South Africa	**Mr. Govender**
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	**Mr. Parham**
	United States of America	**Ms. Kinyon**

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

Please recycle

The meeting resumed at 3.30 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which he requests to be invited to participate in this meeting. Unless I hear any objection, I invite that representative to participate in this meeting.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al Oyaidi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing to the Council. My delegation is delivering this statement on behalf of the Arab delegations to the United Nations.

I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. The Arab Group would like to express its appreciation for this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. This meeting takes place as the Israeli Government persists in its intransigence and its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, jeopardizing the entire peace process.

The Arab-Israeli conflict supersedes all other issues in the Middle East, as there is no other regional conflict that more greatly affects international peace. What exacerbates the situation is the lack of good faith on the part of the Israeli Government, which, instead of seriously engaging in the peace process, continues to confiscate more Palestinian territory, to build illegal settlements, thereby creating new realities on the ground, to kill and unlawfully evict Palestinians, and to confiscate their land and property.

Israeli settlement activities undermine the establishment of a lasting, contiguous and viable Palestinian State. That makes it difficult for any Palestinian Government to function effectively and to convince its people that peace is achievable. It is immoral that a nation under occupation must endure punishment while the occupying Power pursues its settlement activities with impunity. Peace is the only way to achieve security for our Palestinian brothers and for the Israelis, but we doubt Israel's intentions when it shows no sincerity with regard to peace. It continues to undermine the negotiation process and to pursue unilateral actions, which will not lead to peace. It is time for Israel to realize that it is not above the international standards of behaviour, which are based on international law.

Most States gathered in this Council, including the permanent members, have issued separate statements against Israeli settlement activities. What is needed is the adoption of a unified position clearly reflecting that consensus. The Arab States have clearly affirmed their commitment to peace through the Arab Peace Initiative, which was initiated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and later adopted at the Arab summit in Beirut. The Arab States affirmed their commitment to achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on international law, but there was no reciprocal response or commitment from Israel. There is an urgent need to revive the peace process and for Israel to sincerely and seriously engage in it, including an immediate freeze on settlement construction, and to start dismantling the settlements instead of expanding them.

The current situation in the besieged Gaza Strip is another factor that has exacerbated the problem and turned Gaza into a large prison through the siege imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, unleashing an appalling humanitarian disaster. The Israeli occupying forces continue their barbaric military attacks against the Palestinian people, the most recent of which took place in Gaza on 2 April and caused deaths in Beit Lahia, where many others were also wounded. That was just the latest in a long list of Israeli violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law.

Through its repeated attacks and crimes, Israel shows that it considers itself above the law. It disregards resolutions of international legality and international law and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. It exploits the international community's silence and reluctance to address Israeli war crimes.

In this context, the Arab Group demands that the United Nations, in particular the Security Council and the Quartet, assume its responsibilities, put an end to the brutal settlement activities and ongoing aggression against unarmed Palestinian people in Gaza, stop the Israeli siege, open the crossings to and from Gaza, and enforce the agreement on border crossings.

On the occasion of the annual Palestinian Prisoners' Day, the Arab Group urges the international community, in particular the Security Council, to compel the Israeli authorities to allow Palestinians to visit their relatives in Israeli prisons and to release the more than 6,000 prisoners being held there, including 300 who have been in Israeli prison for decades.

The Arab Group urges the international community to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particularly those of this Council. It also demands that Israel withdraw its forces from all Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. The steps that Israel is taking or may take in the future to alter the legal, physical and demographic nature of territories in the Syrian Golan are null and void, and clear violations of the United Nations Charter and resolutions of international legality, including resolution 497 (1981). The Arab Group also demands the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon's Sheba'a Farms, the Kfar Shuba Hills and the northern part of Al-Ghajar. The Arab Group asks that the Security Council strive to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), the principle of land for peace, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The freezing of the peace process only fans the flames of extremist tendencies and raises despair and frustration to a dangerous level. It is most urgent to take note that the Arab and Islamic public perceives the international community to be lacking in seriousness and credibility. We see the Security Council's inability to implement its own resolutions as a problem resulting from the double standards in international relations, in particular the fact that the use of the veto power incapacitates the Council and makes it unable to assist affected States. When the Security Council is able to resolve this problem, the commitment and respect of all Member States for all Council resolutions will be assured. Such a change will result in making the Security Council more credible and capable of performing the tasks needed to maintain international peace and security.

In conclusion, the Arab Group welcomes the efforts of President Barack Obama to achieve a comprehensive peace and the establishment of a sovereign State for the Palestinian people, living side by side with Israel, as called for in his statement before the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly in 2010 (see A/65/PV.11), in which he spoke of the establishment and recognition of a Palestinian State at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, with borders drawn at the lines of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mrs. Smith (Norway): This debate comes at a time of momentous developments across the Middle East and North Africa. The popular uprisings in the region are ushering in a period of great opportunity. We are hopeful that the people of the Middle East will be heard in their rightful demands for political participation and human rights. Our message to the regimes and the people is clear — autocratic rule and popular repression belong to the past; democracy and freedom are the future.

In the midst of these historic changes, I would like to take this opportunity to report on another and no less historic event in the history of the Middle East peace process. At the meeting of the international donor group for the Palestinians in Brussels last week, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations reported to the donor community that the Palestinian Authority is above the threshold for a functioning State. The three organizations have concluded that the Palestinian Authority's delivery of public services to its population and implementation of reforms now compare favourably with those of many middle-income countries. The IMF even reported that Palestinian reforms have come so far that the public financial management system is not only ready to support the functions of a State, but has even become a model for other developing countries. At the same time the, Palestinian Authority has reduced its dependence on donor budget support by almost 50 per cent. In other words, we have a functioning Palestinian State structure.

This remarkable progress over the past few years could not have happened without the determination and hard work of Prime Minister Fayyad and his Cabinet, the cooperation and support of the Government of Israel, and the unwavering financial support of the international donor community. This tripartite cooperation within the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee framework has greatly contributed to the success of Palestinian State-building efforts.

However, there are still challenges that need immediate attention. The Palestinian State-building agenda is rapidly approaching its limits in terms of what it can achieve within the political and physical space available to the Palestinian Authority. As long as Israel maintains control in Area C, which constitutes 60 per cent of the West Bank, economic growth will not be sufficient to enable the Palestinian Authority to become sustainable. To break this cycle and secure the future sustainability of the Authority, Israel needs to take further steps to dismantle restrictions and measures in Area C, allow access to land and water in these areas, and pursue a coherent trade strategy.

As noted time and time again by the international community, the Palestinian State-building track and the political negotiating track are interdependent. Progress on one track can only go so far without progress on the other. For all practical purposes, the State-building process has been completed. The road towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, however, goes through negotiations.

But time is running out. We are only a few months away from the internationally recognized deadline for negotiating a framework agreement on permanent status and a subsequent comprehensive peace treaty. Now is the time for both parties to come back to the negotiating table and show, through decisive action, that this conflict can be ended and the Palestinians can have their own independent, democratic and viable State.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the honour to address the Security Council today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and to start by expressing the Movement's appreciation for the briefing given today by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that, at this critical juncture, the international community must renew its resolve to uphold its long-standing commitment to the realization of the two-State solution on the basis of international law and the terms of reference of the peace process. There is an international consensus that we must establish the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region by September of this year. Upholding that consensus and fulfilling our commitments require urgent collective action on the part of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

NAM regrets that all serious efforts exerted to date by international and regional parties, including the Quartet, to resume and advance direct negotiations on the Palestinian track towards that objective have failed. It is equally alarming for the Movement that merely convening a Quartet meeting is becoming an issue in itself, with consecutive meetings postponed and no apparent determination to put forth a clear and credible vision for achieving the desired solution.

It is also highly regrettable that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to defy the will of the international community and pursues its illegal settlement activities, along with many other policies and practices, in a manner that constitutes the main obstacle to all efforts to resume peace negotiations, thus making it nearly impossible to realize the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

Israel's refusal to renew the unilateral moratorium on settlement activities; the recent announcements regarding the establishment of thousands more settlement units at an unprecedented pace; and the continued Israeli demolitions of Palestinian property, including historic places such as the Shepherd Hotel in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem, and of numerous Palestinian homes in order to build new settlements in the heart of the city all affirm Israel's expansionist intentions and totally contradict the Israeli Government's alleged commitment to the peace process and its sincerity in achieving the two-State solution.

All indications at the present time, including provocative declarations, accelerated illegal construction on the ground and the continued revocation of Palestinian residency rights, reaffirm that Israel is persisting with its unlawful attempts to alter the geographic and demographic situation of the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly East Jerusalem, with a view to establishing new realities on the ground that hamper the final status negotiations. The Security Council should reject and condemn such unlawful acts.

The majority view of the Non-Aligned Movement States that co-sponsored the draft resolution presented earlier this year to the Security Council (S/2011/24) — calling for the immediate cessation of all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, as outlined in relevant letters addressed by the Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement to the President of the Security Council — reflects the international position on this most critical issue. The Non-Aligned Movement regrets the fact that the draft resolution was not adopted by the Security Council as we had hoped and expected.

The Non-Aligned Movement therefore reiterates its call for the Security Council to be resolute in demanding that Israel abide by its legal obligations. Israeli impunity must be tolerated no more and the Security Council has the responsibility to ensure that Israel abides forthwith with all of its obligations, including those under the Fourth Geneva Convention, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Road Map.

In this connection, the Movement takes note with appreciation of the consultations undertaken by the Government of Switzerland to implement the recommendation made by the General Assembly in resolution 64/254, of 26 February 2010, that a Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention be convened on measures to enforce the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. NAM stresses the importance of a speedy resumption of the process of consultations, with a view to convening a Conference of High Contracting Parties at the earliest possible date.

The Non-Aligned Movement condemns the heinous Israeli military attacks on Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip earlier this month, which resulted in the killing of 19 Palestinian civilians, and regrets the fact that the Security Council failed to react after considering this serious matter. We call upon the Security Council to take all necessary measures in order to protect the Palestinian civilian population living under Israeli occupation, in accordance with international humanitarian law and in keeping with the swift actions by the Security Council to protect civilians elsewhere.

In this regard, NAM emphasizes the need to ensure that Israel, the occupying Power, fully lift its illegal blockade on Gaza, in accordance with its obligations under international law, resolution 1860 (2009) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions. This unresolved crisis continues to have serious repercussions for broader efforts to promote peace and unite the Palestinian people, and continues to inflict deep suffering on them.

In this connection, the Movement also emphasizes once again the need for the reconstruction of Gaza, and calls on Israel to open all its crossing points with Gaza and allow for the sustained and regular movement of persons and goods, including the import of essential reconstruction materials, including those needed for the long overdue reconstruction of United Nations facilities and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools, and normal commercial flows. NAM also reiterates the need to empower UNRWA with all the financial and human support needed to undertake its mission effectively.

NAM strongly condemns the continued detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails, where ill-treatment and torture are widely used. The Movement commends international efforts to shed light on this crisis, including through the convening of the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine in March in Vienna, focusing on the urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities. It is the conviction of the members of the Movement that those prisoners, who include children and women, should be immediately released, and proper international inspection of their current condition should be a priority for the international community, particularly the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

There is unanimous agreement on the imperative need for Israel to respect its obligations in order for direct negotiations to be resumed towards a two-State solution, based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, must exert all efforts to ensure that Israel abides by its obligations and commitments forthwith and resume final status negotiations on appropriate grounds so that we may this year realize the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Turning now to Lebanon, NAM condemns Israel's ongoing violations of Lebanese sovereignty and the recurrence of serious breaches of resolution 1701 (2006). The Movement calls on all parties concerned to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) in order to end the current fragility and avoid a recurrence of hostilities.

Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan or to impose its jurisdiction and administration there are null, void and have no legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The Non-Aligned Movement looks forward to the leadership of the Security Council and the revitalized Quartet setting the parameters that will govern our joint efforts in the run-up to the establishment of the independent State of Palestine in September. The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its commitment to work hand in hand with the Council, the Quartet and other partners to ensure that we achieve our just cause.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): Thank you very much, Sir, for giving us this opportunity to address the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to thank Mr. Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing, as well as Ambassador Mansour and Ambassador Reuben for their respective statements.

Japan strongly supports a two-State solution and remains convinced that achieving such a solution through sincere negotiations is the only way to achieve durable peace. We believe that at present there is a lack of mutual trust, which is preventing the resumption of direct negotiations. We call on both sides to engage with the United States and the international community and to take steps that will create an environment conducive to restarting direct negotiations. We strongly encourage both parties to restart direct negotiations.

The two parties must abide by their obligations under previous agreements, most importantly the Road Map. We call on Israel, as we have done on so many occasions, to freeze its settlement activities in the West Bank, which includes East Jerusalem. In this connection, Japan is deeply concerned that the Israeli authorities continue to approve plans to build more settlements. Japan does not recognize any unilateral measures that prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations.

At the same time, we call upon the Palestinian Authority to continue its efforts to improve security and fulfil its commitments to cease violence and work against incitement. Japan strongly condemns the murder that occurred on 12 March in Itamar, in the north of the West Bank. Only negotiations, not violence, can bring about a resolution of the issues.

According to the assessment provided by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations at the recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the Palestinian Authority is now above the threshold for a functioning State in key sectors. Japan strongly supports the State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority and will continue to provide assistance thereto.

We are seriously concerned about the recent escalation of violence along the borders between Israel and the Gaza Strip. We strongly condemn the targeting of civilians. We continue to call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) and call on Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to refrain from violence and to accept mutual coexistence.

Japan remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Japan stresses the importance of lifting the blockade while preventing the flow of weapons into the Gaza Strip. We do not agree with the blockade. We also call on those wishing to provide aid to the Gaza Strip to coordinate appropriately with relevant authorities to avoid unforeseen incidents. We call on both parties to make the difficult but necessary decisions to advance peace. Japan will continue to make efforts to realize a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba supports the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The situation in the region, in particular in occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, remains deplorable. The situation in the Gaza Strip is unsustainable. Cuba is deeply concerned by the increasing deterioration of conditions there due to the escalation of the military offensive carried out by Israel over the past few months. A ceasefire is urgently needed.

Israel's flagrant and deliberate violations of the provisions of international humanitarian law against the civilian population in Gaza are unacceptable. The international community must take all possible practical measures to put an end to this state of affairs and prevent Israel's indiscriminate bombing of the Palestinian people. Cuba reiterates its demand that Israel immediately, unconditionally and fully lift the cruel and illegal blockade of Gaza and allow the free movement of supplies to and from the Gaza Strip and permanent humanitarian access.

Cuba condemns the settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. We demand the immediate cessation of the demolition of Palestinian houses, the construction of the wall and the eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, as well as other illegal incitements, provocations and attacks carried out by extremist settlers against the Palestinian people and holy sites. These measures and policies implemented by Israel are serious and flagrant violations of international law, the United Nations Charter, many General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004.

The Security Council cannot remain passive in the face of these facts. Cuba regrets that the recent exercise of the veto by a Council member prevented the adoption of a resolution condemning settlements and demanding an end to these policies. Israel has exploited the Council's silence on this issue in recent years to continue to pursue these illegal policies. The widespread physical, economic and social devastation caused by the illegal and destructive settlement practices is the main obstacle to reaching a peace agreement. The settlement policy prevents, in practical terms, the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders and thus the possibility of a just resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Cuba reaffirms that any measure or action that Israel has taken or shall take to alter the legal, physical and demographic status or institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as Israeli measures to exercise its jurisdiction and administration in this territory, are legally null and void. We state once again that these measures and actions, including the illegal construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, are violations of international law, international agreements, the United Nations Charter and resolutions, including resolution 497 (1981), and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and constitute a challenge to the international community. Cuba demands Israel's full withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

A peace agreement must be achieved this year, in accordance with the relevant resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. We have witnessed increasing international recognition of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders. We trust that September 2011 will prove the right time to achieve this goal at last.

Cuba once again reiterates its position in favour of a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the Middle East that would put an end to the occupation of the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and ensure the Palestinian people's exercise of their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of this Council and, secondly, align my delegation with the statements made by the representatives of Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Tajikistan, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Malaysia is deeply concerned by the recent disproportionate attacks by Israeli military forces in the Gaza Strip. The attacks have resulted in a number of civilian casualties and, if left unchecked, would lead to greater destruction and further loss of lives, especially among the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. We therefore urge all involved parties to refrain from any provocative act and call on the international community, especially the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet, to act swiftly and decisively to ensure that

Israel ceases its military operations in the Gaza Strip and to prevent any further escalation of violence.

My delegation is also concerned by recent articles and comments appearing in the newspapers regarding the so-called Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48). We are of the view that such comments have not nullified the report or suggested that the author wanted to retract it. In this regard, my delegation supports the statement by the three other co-authors of the report, which, in a way, has further bolstered the process of having Israel answer to the world for having used disproportionate force leading to the death of approximately 1,400 Palestinians during the military onslaught it carried out over two years ago. We would like to state here that the imperatives of peace and justice are mutual, and therefore justice for the Palestinians in Gaza cannot be delayed in order to reach peace.

In this connection, we reiterate our call on Israel to completely lift the blockade on Gaza, which is a form of collective punishment that is forbidden under international law, and to expedite further approval of United Nations projects. Israel must fulfil its legal and international obligations by stopping all settlement activities, the construction of the separation wall and the demolition of Palestinian-owned buildings and infrastructure, particularly in East Jerusalem, which are illegal under international law and represent serious impediments contributing to the deadlock of the peace talks.

Resolving these issues will require the international community to focus all its energy and effort at achieving a comprehensive peace in the region and restoring the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to an independent State of Palestine. All parties must act truthfully and sincerely to achieve these objectives. We again urge the Security Council to take the necessary measures to implement the Council's very own resolutions on Palestine and on the Middle East, failing which the Council's credibility would be at stake.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): As many colleagues have pointed out, historic events are sweeping the Middle East and North Africa. These major developments rightfully deserve the attention of the international community.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian issue is rapidly approaching a critical stage. Turkey continues to believe firmly that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies at the heart of many disputes in the region and beyond and therefore merits our special attention. That is why the quest for a lasting and comprehensive settlement should not take a back seat to developments in the region. On the contrary, it must once again be our priority.

Despite the current impasse in the peace process due to Israel's unabated settlement activities in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, we see no alternative to a negotiated settlement. The lack of a solution serves only to perpetuate insecurity and suffering. Turkey attributes importance to the work of the Quartet and hopes that it will meet soon to lay out the parameters of direct negotiations.

The Palestinians have been working hard for the past two years to lay the institutional groundwork of their future State. As evidenced at the recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC), they are ready. Through its State-building efforts, the Palestinian Authority has proved to all skeptics that the Palestinians deserve to attain their decades-long target of internationally recognized statehood, even though they continue to suffer under occupation.

Needless to say, the progress on the ground as reflected in economic figures can be sustainable only if the political process proceeds in parallel with it. In other words, efforts in good faith should not be confined to so-called "economic peace" but should reinforce the political dimension of the peace process and materialize in the form of Palestinian statehood. The time has come to show solidarity with the Palestinians and help them to live in peace and dignity.

In that context, Turkey believes that if the Palestinians are objectively ready to be accepted as a fully fledged State member of the international community, with all the relevant rights and responsibilities — and it is clear that they are on the verge of that momentous step — then the international community cannot and must not turn a blind eye to their just and legitimate appeal.

On the other hand, the plight of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip should urgently be alleviated, and the reconstruction and rehabilitation requirements of the Gaza Strip must urgently be addressed. Security

Council resolution 1860 (2009) must be implemented as a whole. The current humanitarian and human rights conditions of the civilian population in Gaza are unsustainable, unacceptable and, ultimately, not in the interests of any of those concerned. The recent escalation of tensions among the parties is clear proof that the situation is tenuous at best. Minimalist approaches aimed at public diplomacy will not work. Israel must lift its illegal blockade of Gaza immediately.

Meanwhile, achieving national reconciliation among Palestinians also remains an urgent priority. Turkey calls on the Palestinian groups to once and for all end their disunity, embracing a future in their own State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. In that respect, the international community should extend a helping hand, in an unequivocal manner, to the Palestinians.

Eleven months have passed since the deadly attack by Israeli forces on a humanitarian aid convoy sailing to Gaza, which resulted in nine civilian deaths and many injuries. That was an international incident with ramifications for international peace and security, which is why the Council issued a very firm presidential statement immediately following the event.

Moreover, that tragic episode was also the result of numerous and successive blatant violations of international law by Israel, beginning with the imposition of an unlawful blockade and continuing with the torture and murder of passengers on the international humanitarian aid convoy. Turkey at first tried to prevent this incident; then, once tragedy had struck, it referred the matter to the relevant international bodies. Turkey, for its part, has strictly abided by all the parameters established for the international inquiry process under the auspices of the United Nations, while refraining from unilateral acts and inflammatory statements.

We continue to make every contribution to the inquiry process under the auspices of the United Nations, with the expectation that a fair and just conclusion will be reached. But there should be no question about our resolve with respect to this issue. We will pursue this matter and explore every avenue available in the international system until we are convinced that justice has been done. No member of the international community is above international law. Accountability is the key to stability and security. It should also be borne in mind that the phenomenon of humanitarian convoys to Gaza cannot simply be explained away as unilateral provocations. If the current pattern of Israeli policies towards Gaza, which target the entire population in a disproportionate manner, can be reversed, then the root cause of such reactions will also have been eliminated.

In conclusion, let me reiterate once more Turkey's unwavering support for and determination to assist our Palestinian brothers and sisters in the process of reaching their long-delayed target of a viable, peaceful and prosperous Palestinian State.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Serrano: The candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

This debate comes at a time when the international community is faced with a number of challenges in the Middle East region. Nevertheless, the Arab-Israeli conflict remains a focal point and the events across the Arab world, while historic in their own right, mean that we must increase our efforts to address this problem with the utmost priority.

The European Union (EU) firmly believes that the transformational moment we are witnessing is actually an opportunity not to be missed. The parties and the region have waited long enough. Their hopes and aspirations have been dashed too many times. We have invested a great deal of effort in the Quartet in recent weeks, and will continue to do so, because it is our conviction that by complementing and supporting United States efforts, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia, has a contribution to give to the negotiated solution we all hope will be achieved. We also recognize the crucial importance of an active Arab contribution building on the Arab Peace Initiative.

The European Union affirms that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudge the outcome of negotiations. We must continue to make concerted efforts towards a negotiated solution. The European Union reiterates that settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-State solution impossible. All settlement activity, including in East Jerusalem, should cease immediately. New construction plans should be abandoned.

Trust between the parties has been seriously undermined. That is why our efforts have been aimed at promoting a credible framework for the resumption of negotiations between the parties on all final-status issues that should lead to a two-State solution by September 2011.

This is an opportunity for the European Union to recall its positions in this regard. We believe that the following parameters could serve as a basis for a resumption of negotiations between the parties: first, an agreement on the borders of the two States, based on the 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties; secondly, security arrangements that, for Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over, and, for Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with new and emerging threats; thirdly, a just, fair and agreed solution to the refugee question; and fourthly, fulfilment of the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem. A way must be found, through negotiations, to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both States.

The European Union has a strong track record as a supporter of and large contributor to Prime Minister Fayyad's State-building programme. At the recent Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting on 13 April, hosted by European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton in Brussels, there was a unanimous acknowledgment that the Palestinian Authority's State-building effort has gained renewed momentum in the past two years as the international community has coordinated its efforts to support the plans to build a sustainable economy and to strengthen State institutions. The European Union welcomes the assessment of the United Nations and the international financial institutions that the Palestinian institutions are above the threshold for a functioning State in the key sectors they studied and compare favourably with those in many established States, despite the continuing occupation and the divide between the West Bank and Gaza.

The European Union strongly supports this institution-building process. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the organization of a second international donors conference for the Palestinian State this June in Paris. The European Union has further increased the component devoted to institution-building assistance, which this year amounts to €75 million out of €300 million earmarked for the occupied Palestinian territory. However, the significant achievements of the Palestinian people will be sustainable only if there is a political breakthrough.

The European Union regrets the renewed violence witnessed in the past weeks. European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton has made clear statements condemning mortar and rocket attacks out of the Gaza Strip, in particular the recent attack on a school bus, which resulted in the death of a student, and has called for these attacks to stop immediately and permanently. She has also deplored the loss of civilian life in Gaza and called on Israel to show restraint. The lives of civilians must be protected everywhere and in all circumstances. The European Union urges full respect for international humanitarian law. The announced ceasefire must be fully respected by all sides if there is to be any hope of a genuine peace process. The European Union calls on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.

The European Union firmly reiterates its calls for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) calling for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, including goods and persons from the West Bank. The European Union calls on all international supporters to make use of the existing land crossings to channel their support to Gaza.

Increased and accelerated imports of construction materials are another crucial component of Gaza's recovery. Despite some progress following the decision of the Government of Israel in June 2010 regarding Gaza access, further efforts are needed to achieve a fundamental change of policy that allows for the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza and improves the daily lives of the population while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The European Union reiterates its readiness to contribute substantially to a comprehensive and sustainable solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Diallo (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, allow me to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on the exemplary manner in which you have been steering the work of the Council this month. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Li Baodong, Permanent Representative of China, for his efficient presidency of the Council in March.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for today's excellent briefing, in which he vividly described the volatile situation on the ground, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and called on the international community to engage with the parties to create conditions conducive to the resumption of the peace process.

The recent upsurge in violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip, is a cruel reminder of how tense and fragile the situation remains. The rocket fire by Palestinian militants and reprisals by Israeli forces have claimed numerous victims, most of them Palestinian civilians. Our Committee calls on the parties to refrain from all provocation and to act responsibly, and unequivocally condemns all attacks on civilians, who urgently require protection.

We are hopeful that the Council will assume its Charter responsibilities by acting as resolutely and with the same vigour as it has in other ongoing conflict situations. It must also redouble its efforts to ensure the full implementation of its resolution 1860 (2009) in order to end the Gaza blockade and restrictions on the freedom of persons and goods, and to promote inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

We look forward to the resumption of serious direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians on all permanent status issues before the September target date set by the Quartet. In that respect, we call on the Quartet to speedily endorse the recent initiative of the United Kingdom, France and Germany to restart negotiations leading to the signing of an agreement on Jerusalem as the capital of two States, Israel and Palestine, founded on the basis of the borders of June 1967; to the reaffirmation of the illegality of settlements; to a just, consensual solution to the refugee question; and to security arrangements ending the Israeli occupation.

The negotiations will succeed only if the parties implement in good faith their road map obligations, in particular a complete freeze of all Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, including so-called natural growth. I take this opportunity to register our disappointment with the Council's lack of leadership on this important issue, and its unwillingness to reaffirm its previous positions and to adopt the pertinent draft resolution, which enjoyed vast support among Member States. Israel's unfortunate recent approval of over 900 additional housing units in Gilo in East Jerusalem illustrates the fact that the issue is not going away. It is the Council's Charter and moral obligation to intervene.

We are pleased to note the recognition of the State of Palestine by numerous Member States. These countries and many others are supporting the Palestinian Authority's programme to build the State by September. The United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have confirmed that the Palestinians now have the institutional structure necessary to administer their own State.

Since the most recent open debate of the Council under this agenda item (see S/PV.6484), our Committee has held international meetings in Vienna and Montevideo devoted to achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace. We remain fully committed to and will continue to promote the objective of a two-State solution, in conformity with Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, whereby Israel and the State of Palestine will live side by side in peace and security. The United Nations and its Security Council have a very special responsibility to ensure the realization of this vision. I assure the Council of the Committee's cooperation and support in the implementation of its own resolutions on the Palestinian question.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan.

Mr. Neziri (Tajikistan): I have the pleasure to deliver the following statement on behalf of the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tajikistan's capacity as Chair of the OIC group.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing. I also would like to express our deep appreciation to the Colombian presidency of the Security Council for the convening of this timely meeting and for giving the OIC group the opportunity to address the Council.

The Palestinian question remains a top priority and a challenge for the entire international community. The implementation and fulfilment of our collective political commitments, resolutions and pledges on this issue have been pending for more than half a century. The OIC group remains firm in its conviction that the Security Council must not be absolved of its role in this regard and should act forthwith to ensure the realization by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination, sovereignty and independence in their State of Palestine in the territory occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, including a just solution for the plight of the Palestine refugees in line with United Nations resolutions and international law.

Our debate today acquires extraordinary importance, given that it coincides with the difficult situation that millions of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continue to endure. Despite resolution 1860 (2009), of 8 January 2009, Israel, the occupying Power, continues its military aggression against the Gaza Strip. The illegal Israeli blockade remains in force, thereby continuing to affect the lives of the entire Palestinian civilian population of Gaza — preventing their access to humanitarian aid and basic materials; impeding reconstruction, including by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United Nations Development Programme, of the thousands of destroyed homes and infrastructure; and obstructing economic and social recovery. In this regard, the OIC group continues to call for serious follow-up to the findings and recommendations of the investigations of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict as an essential step to ensuring justice and accountability and averting further human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory by Israel, the occupying Power.

In the West Bank, Israel continues its illegal settlement construction, home demolitions, violent military raids, movement restrictions and land confiscation, imposing hundreds of checkpoints and detaining thousands of Palestinians. It also continues to build the annexation wall, in clear violation of international law and the legal authority of the advisory opinion (see A/ES-10/273) of the International Court of Justice. These violations are most intense and aggressive in occupied East Jerusalem, where Israel also continues a systematic process to alter the historic Palestinian-Arab-Islamic identity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif through its flagrant attempts to Judaize the city by changing its demographic composition and character.

Today, the OIC group reaffirms the centrality of the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif for the entire Islamic Ummah and stresses the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic nature of occupied East Jerusalem and the need for full respect for the sanctity of Islamic and Christian holy places in the city. The OIC group also reaffirms that Al-Quds Al-Sharif remains an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and that its illegal annexation by Israel continues to be rejected and unrecognized by the international community.

We affirm that the resolution of the entire Middle East conflict is dependent on solving its core issue, which is the Palestinian question. The international consensus to realize the vision of two States requires a clear stance based on international legitimacy and justice. There must be full acknowledgement of, and respect for, the historic commitments and pledges made in that regard, as embodied in the terms of reference of the peace process, namely, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative, to which the OIC subscribes, and the Quartet Road Map. Every effort must be exerted by the Security Council as well as by the Quartet, in the light of its declared commitment to fulfil the collective legal and moral responsibilities relevant to the realization of peace, justice and security in the region this year.

At this crucial stage, there must also be acknowledgement of, and continued full support for, Palestinian State-building efforts, which are advancing successfully. Since, regrettably, the peace process remains in a sate of stagnation, the time is ripe to recognize the independent State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, as that is the cornerstone for achieving stability, prosperity, peace and security for Palestine, Israel and other neighbouring countries in the region.

The OIC also joins the international community's stance reaffirming that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structures, as well as Israeli measures to impose its jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect. The OIC demands that Israel abide fully and immediately by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as from the remaining Lebanese occupied land.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the full support and solidarity of the OIC with the Palestinian people in their endeavour to regain their legitimate and inalienable national rights, including their rights of return, self-determination and to establish their independent Palestinian State on their national soil, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to say that my country is an important party to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as to reiterate two vital points. First, the Syrian Golan Heights have remained under Israeli occupation since 1967. Secondly, when my country was a non-permanent member of the Security Council from 2001 to 2003, we proposed that the Council convene an open public meeting every three months to consider the situation in the Middle East.

My delegation would like to thank the Columbian presidency of the Council for convening this open debate to discuss the escalation of Israeli aggression against the occupied Arab territories. We would also like in particular to thank the Permanent Representative of China for his excellent work as President of the Council last month.

In the many decades of the Israeli occupation that began in June 1967, the Security Council, the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies have adopted hundreds of resolutions calling upon Israel to end its occupation of Arab territories and its massacres of unarmed and unprotected Palestinian people. Sadly, in spite of all those resolutions, the facts show that Israel continues to engage in organized and systematic practices and is not subject to international accountability for its violations of the basic principles of international law and international humanitarian law. This demonstrates that Israel is defying international law.

Among its main hostile acts that have been internationally condemned is its feverish settlement campaign in occupied Arab lands, including its seizure of land, the destruction of houses and expulsion of its inhabitants and the settling of herds of foreign colonialist settlers in those houses — to say nothing of its construction of the racist separation barrier and the Judaization of occupied Jerusalem. All of his is happening right under the noses of the very people who call for the protection of human rights while closing their eyes to flagrant Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories.

Moreover, all of this is taking place while the Security Council remains ineffectual in exercising its duty and obligations to enforce international peace and security in accordance with the purposes and principles and of the United Nations Charter. The most recent example of this was the Council's non-adoption of a draft resolution (S/2011/24) calling on Israel to end its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories (see S/PV.6484), in spite of the fact that the draft resolution and the principle of the illegality of Israel's settlement activity both enjoyed international consensus.

Two years have gone by since the Israeli aggression against Gaza began. During that action, Israel committed war crimes and serious violations of humanitarian law considered to be crimes against humanity. But the Israeli perpetrators of those crimes have not been held accountable or subjected to any punishment. Israel continues to reject the rebuilding of schools and other facilities by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and is preventing all such activities and projects in Gaza. That has only encouraged Israel to pursue its inhuman embargo against the people living in Gaza. In addition, Israel is once again threatening further aggression against the second humanitarian flotilla, which is planning to provide humanitarian aid. Israel is committing further aggression against Gaza and is undertaking further massacres of Palestinians, creating dozens of innocent casualties and many hundreds of wounded civilians.

In this context, we are shocked by the lack of any response from the international community to the appeals by the Palestinian people. For many decades, the international community has ignored the Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people and its continued occupation of Arab land. In the past few days, the League of Arab States has called upon the Security Council to adopt a resolution to impose an air embargo against Israeli airplanes attacking Gaza, so as to protect unarmed civilians and to put an end to the unjust embargo. We therefore call on the Security Council to follow up immediately on that demand by the League of Arab States to protect Palestinian civilians. We reaffirm that the protection of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese civilians living under Israeli occupation and subject to Israeli attacks on a daily basis is an integral part of the issue of protecting all civilians without distinction.

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan is also a very serious issue. Israel refuses to return and reintegrate the Syrian Golan into Syria and flouts international resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981), which declares the occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel to be completely illegal, null and void. Israel is continuing its policy of terror and repression against Syrian civilians in the Golan, as well as to imprison Syrian citizens. It is also seizing land and continuing settlement activities, including its most recent settlement campaign in the Syrian Golan. A council of settlers in the Golan has undertaken a new provocative measure in the form of a publicity campaign for the building of new settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. The campaign, called "Welcome to Golan", is responsible for transferring 3,000 Israeli settler families to the Golan.

The Israeli Knesset recently adopted a law requiring a general referendum before any Israeli retreat from the occupied Syrian Golan or occupied East Jerusalem. This is in total disregard for international law and the resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 497 (1981) and 487 (1981). We reiterate that this measure is totally rejected and unacceptable and does not change the fact that the Golan is occupied Syrian land and that the restoration of the entire Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967 must be the basis of any peacebuilding arrangements. We hold the Israeli Government responsible for all these hostile and provocative policies.

In their statements today, some permanent members of the Council have referred to the situation in my country. They have spoken in biased terms and have made very dangerous exaggerated statements. I would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the following.

On Saturday, 16 April, Syria's President chaired the first meeting of the new Government. He called on the Government to be active and to take immediate action in order to launch a number of draft proposals to ensure reforms and promote national democracy and citizen participation, for the purpose of consolidating national unity, stability and security for the country and its citizens. Four days after that meeting, the Government submitted three draft laws, which were signed by the President and entered into force today, lifting the emergency law, dismantling the Supreme State Security Court and granting the right to peaceful demonstrations. The Government is now working expeditiously on a number of new draft laws on political parties, the media and local administrations.

President Al-Assad is seen by all as a reforming leader, because he is aware of the fact that these reforms are a national necessity — exclusively national. Needless to say, any reform in any State Member of the United Nations is, according to the Charter, a domestic issue. All must respect the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, including some permanent member States. Such reforms must not be obstructed by obstacles that could only serve foreign interests and agendas. Whoever encourages reform from the outside cannot deliberately ignore the fact that reforms and measures have been undertaken on the ground. Those individuals must not endeavour to undermine the very well-known Syrian model of reform, which is based on tolerance and co-existence among the various sectors of the country's population.

A number of calls have been made in the Security Council, including for the overthrow of legitimate Governments. Those who make such calls are responsible for negative incitement and for irresponsible acts that harm the interests of peoples and Governments. That represents a clear violation of the United Nations Charter and an irrational attempt to use international law to take advantage of this meeting on the situation in the Middle East, which is limited to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in particular the question of Palestine. Thus, it is a misuse of that agenda item to ignore the underlying aspects of the problem. It also encourages the continuing Israeli aggression and occupation and the Israeli Government's engagement in further violence and settlement expansion. Furthermore, it encourages intransigence and defiance of the wishes of the international community and the Palestinian people for peace.

We would have liked to hear the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom express, if only just once, their sympathy for and empathy with the suffering of the Syrians living in the Syrian Golan, occupied since 1967. We would have liked to hear those two delegations call on Israel to put an end to the state of emergency that has been in effect in that country since 1948 to this day. The state of emergency has been used to seize Palestinian territory, to destroy houses and expel their inhabitants, and to allow gangs of Israeli settlers to occupy the land. Furthermore, Israel has exploited an emergency regulation enacted under the British Mandate in 1939 and applied to all of Palestine.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): We congratulate you, Sir, on steering the work of the Security Council this month with dedication and finesse.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and Tajikistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively.

During the most recent debate on the Middle East in this Chamber (see S/PV.6484), most of us lamented the breakdown of Palestine-Israel direct negotiations and its implications for peace in the region. Three months later, the pall of gloom is heavier. The prospects for a resumption of the Middle East peace process are not encouraging. The slight window of opportunity for sustainable peace, created by the recent reduction in violence, appears to be slipping through our fingers. To make matters worse, the Middle East Quartet also appears to be increasingly hamstrung in its efforts to facilitate the resumption of direct negotiations and to specify the parameters of the final settlement. That was made evident by the recent postponement of the Quartet's Berlin meeting.

Amidst such despair, the Security Council, too, has abdicated its role in the settlement of the question of Palestine to individual countries or informal groupings. It is worrisome to note that the Council's only activities in regard to the Palestinian issue are its quarterly open debates, where even spirited and well-drafted statements fail to cure the somnambulance of their audience, which knows only too well that the stalemate is as immutable as the proverbial North Star.

The only ray of hope in this pessimistic scenario is the impressive march of the Palestinian Authority on the road to statehood. Numerous independent sources have confirmed that building State institutions by August is well within the reach of the Palestinian Authority. According to recent reports prepared by the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee of the Middle East Quartet, the Palestinian Authority is above the threshold of a functioning State in several key sectors. Its fiscal performance and high rates of economic growth in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have been duly acknowledged in those reports. The Quartet itself has welcomed that assessment and stated that Palestinian institutions compared favourably with those of established States. The Palestinian Authority's policies of self-reliance, empowerment and creating economic opportunities have disabused even the occupiers of their ability to justify the illegal occupation as a necessary evil.

The attainment of the goal of a Palestinian State by September is well within our grasp. Letting it founder on the rocks of cynicism, inaction or political expediency would have serious consequences for peace and stability. The failure to meet the 1999 deadline set in the Oslo Accords triggered the second intifada. The missing of the 2005 deadline for Palestinian statehood, as set in the Quartet Road Map of 2003, precipitated violence and bloodshed and culminated in the siege on Gaza and its violent aftermath. September 2011 cannot become just another date in that tragic chronology.

The people of Palestine have already travelled more than halfway in honouring their side of the bargain. Israel must reciprocate with an open mind and in good faith. It must stop all settlement activity in the occupied Arab territories and fulfil its obligation to respect the human rights of the Palestinian people.

Israel's blockade of Gaza is neither conscionable nor tenable. Israel must also facilitate the completion of reconstruction projects, including those undertaken by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Pakistan is supportive of lasting peace for all inhabitants of the Middle East, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity or nationality. As Palestinian statehood emerges from the debris of broken promises, it should not be stymied by violence. We join other delegations in calling for a prevailing ceasefire in Gaza.

The framework for peace in the Middle East is set forth in detail in resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008); the Madrid terms of reference; the Arab Peace Initiative; and the Quartet Road Map. Mustering and sustaining the political will to implement the framework is imperative.

We hope that the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet will engage themselves meaningfully with the parties concerned to realize the collective objective of the international community for an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side and in peace with all of its neighbours. Pakistan shares and supports that objective.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Sir, your presidency of the Security Council comes at a very difficult time in the international situation, one which has required consultations and resolutions. The Colombian presidency has demonstrated its wisdom, perceptiveness and vision. This does honour to your friendly country and its work, which deserves all possible praise.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab Group, Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Tajikistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and would like to express the concerns of the Kingdom of Morocco over the delays in the efforts to breathe new life into the peace negotiations and over developments in Gaza and the other occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Only a few months remain before the international community's deadline for enabling the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate aspirations to establish an independent and viable Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. In that context, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the efforts of President Barack Obama of the United States to honour the commitments he made in his statement to the General Assembly on 23 September 2010 (see A/65/PV.11) concerning the right of the Palestinians to establish an independent Palestinian State within a specific time frame. We also feel very optimistic about the continued efforts of the United States to fulfil those commitments, based on the established terms of reference of the peace process and in accordance with international law, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

We look forward to continued international and regional efforts, based on the same vision, to achieve the same objectives. Such efforts would support and complement the positive dynamism that emerged for an unfortunately brief period in the wake of the resumption of direct negotiations last September in Washington, D.C., under the auspices of the United States. In that context, the role of the Quartet, with all its elements and international influence, remains extremely important to the task of launching a new and effective impetus for the negotiations that would bolster the Quartet's credibility and be judged on the basis of its concrete results in September.

While we must voice our deep regret that the Quartet's meetings in March and April have been delayed, we value the constructive ideas produced by the delegations of France, the United Kingdom and Germany during the Security Council's meeting on 18 February (see S/PV.6484) on the objectives that must be attained, the most important of which is enabling the Palestinian people to establish an independent State in the territories occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This vision is consonant with the Arab Peace Initiative and appropriately lays the ground for overcoming the obstacles to direct negotiations.

Since the suspension of direct negotiations, Israel has continued to forcibly annex more Palestinian territory, build more settlements, demolish houses and expel their owners from their ancestral cities and villages. Israel's persistence in building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories is an illegal act that cannot lead to sincere negotiations for a comprehensive and just solution on the basis of international efforts. Settlement construction is an obstacle that cannot be overcome or circumvented; it must be eliminated.

Occupied Jerusalem and adjacent areas are no exception; not only have they not been spared such practices, they have been targeted more heavily than others. Israel has continued its illegal policy of Judaizing that city, which is sacred to all revealed religions. It has sought to change its original character and to build more housing units for its settlers, depopulating it of its Palestinian residents through forcible expulsions, home demolitions and revocation of their residency rights, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law and various Security Council resolutions. The Israeli authorities have continued to attack Islamic shrines; the international community must reject that policy, for it can only lead to increased religious friction both inside and outside the area.

Given its responsibilities as an Arab and Islamic State, and the responsibilities of His Majesty King Mohammed VI as Chair of the Jerusalem Committee of the OIC, Morocco denounces such acts, which affect the special legal status of that holy city and the rest of the Palestinian territories in blatant violation of international legitimacy and the foundations necessary to a just peace. We appeal to the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and to call unequivocally on Israel to end its unilateral actions and respond sincerely and positively to international efforts to resume negotiations forthwith in a way that will lead to their success.

The Gaza Strip is still enduring the frequent escalation of Israeli military operations, exacerbating a situation that was aggravated from the start by the blockade imposed on the civilian population, preventing them from enjoying the bare minimum of humanitarian assistance and the infrastructure necessary for survival. In this regard, we pay tribute to the continuing vital role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its support for the Palestinian people inside the occupied territories and in neighbouring countries. We welcome all initiatives to provide UNRWA with the financial and human resources needed to pursue its vital mandate to ensure the basic living conditions for an extremely important segment of the Palestinian population.

It is no secret that all the elements of a just and comprehensive peace based on two functioning, viable States can be implemented. No one questions the Palestinian people's resolve and sincere desire to live in peaceful coexistence and national reconciliation. The only thing remaining is for Israel to demonstrate political will and a vision of a future free of hegemony. International efforts must be made to move the dynamics of the peace process forward in a region that has seen enough wars and tragedies, and in which all people can look forward to freedom, dignity and peace.

The Kingdom of Morocco, based on its support for peace, international law and legitimacy, the relevant resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, still supports and holds fast to the two-State solution providing for an independent, viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. We also urge Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and all remaining occupied Lebanese territory.

Every country and people of the region has had enough of the obstacles blocking the road to peace, the violence and counter-violence, the victims, tragedies, destruction, mistrust, hatred and alienation. It is high time to effect real and drastic change in the situation through the firm implementation of international law. It is high time for Israel to demonstrate genuine resolve and will to respond to the Arab Peace Initiative and a commitment to living side by side with its neighbours and to building a cooperative, prosperous, secure and safe future for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Lukwiya (Uganda): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of my Permanent Representative, Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda. I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing this morning.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has remained unresolved for far too long, despite protracted international and regional efforts. The situation is not sustainable. We recall the international community's optimism following the resumption of direct talks between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and

President Mahmoud Abbas, and are deeply concerned about the loss of momentum in the peace process in the wake of the breakdown of the talks.

It is now more urgent than ever for both parties to redouble their efforts towards the achievement of a comprehensive peace based on the vision of the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We encourage Israeli and Palestinian leaders alike to resume negotiations without further delay. We call upon both parties to summon the necessary courage to take bold decisions in a spirit of give and take.

In that regard, it is essential to refrain from unilateral actions that prejudge final status issues and undermine progress. It is also important to bear in mind that the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to statehood cannot be delayed much longer and that the legitimate security concerns of Israel must be addressed.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued construction of settlements by Israel and call for a complete freeze on all settlement activity, which not only hinders progress in the negotiations, but also undermines Israel's security. We salute the Palestinians for their continued efforts to fulfil their obligations under the Road Map, particularly in the security and economic development sectors. We also commend President Abbas on his initiative to resolve the current divisions among Palestinians, and encourage him to intensify efforts on that important component.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire, and we reiterate our call for a complete lifting of the blockade on Gaza. We deplore the continued firing of rockets into Israel by Hamas and the airstrikes on Gaza by Israel during the reporting period. We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, to avoid further escalation and to fully implement resolution 1860 (2009).

In conclusion, while the primary responsibility for negotiating and reaching a comprehensive agreement lies with the Israeli and Palestinian parties, the efforts and support of all international and regional partners must be stepped up for that goal to be attained sooner than later.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): I begin by thanking your country, Colombia, and you personally, Mr. President, for steering this very important open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to convey our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing this morning. I also wish to state that the Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Egypt and Tajikistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively. In addition, I wish to briefly make certain points that Bangladesh believes to be of importance.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, has always been of major concern to the international community and the United Nations. A durable and sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the issue of Palestine, which is at the root of the long-lasting crisis, must therefore be our collective strategic objective. All Member States should pledge complete commitment to that objective and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support behind its early realization. Bangladesh is always ready to play a constructive role in that collective endeavour to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the two-State principle. Bangladesh joins the international community in reaffirming its full support for the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination and freedom from continued occupation and oppression.

The people of Palestine are being denied their fundamental right to self-determination and to live freely in their own land, and displaced Palestinians have been denied their right to return home and to live in dignity and safety. Unfortunately, this appears to be the result of a collective failure on the part of the international community, in particular the people of Israel, who have suffered deprivation as they have failed to rise to the occasion by guaranteeing the people of Palestine their fundamental right to self-determination and a sovereign State of their own, side by side with theirs. In order to achieve a lasting solution in the Middle East, it is very important to address the key issue, which is Israel's prolonged and illegal occupation of the Arab territories.

We commend the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and continued Palestinian State-building efforts. However, we are concerned about the disproportionate military strikes and unabated atrocities, causing civilian casualties. Therefore, we call for maximum restraint and respect for international humanitarian law. Furthermore, we regret the discontinuation of Israel's 10-month moratorium on settlement activity, and strongly reaffirm that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudge the outcome of negotiations.

Let me also reiterate our support for the conclusion of such negotiations by September. It is our belief that further delay in the resumption of negotiations is detrimental to the prospects for regional peace and security. We urge the parties and others concerned to urgently strive to expedite Israeli-Palestinian and comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, which is essential to avoid outcomes detrimental to the region.

My delegation believes that direct negotiations will be successful only if there is sustained regional and international support for the talks, the parallel process of Palestinian State-building and the pursuit of a just, lasting and comprehensive regional peace, as envisaged in the Fourth Geneva Convention; the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978);the principle of land for peace; the Madrid terms of reference, which guarantee Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories to the 4 June 1967 line; the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, which are the best guides for achieving a two-State solution.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Bangladesh's long-standing position that the continued illegal occupation of Palestine over the past six decades is the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. Let me also reiterate our full support for a lasting peace for all inhabitants of the region, Arabs and Israelis alike, and our strong commitment to the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side in peace with all its neighbours.

In this holy month, when the people of Israel celebrate their freedom from slavery and the clutches of Pharaoh, we look forward to a global commitment and meaningful action on the ground for the people of Palestine to be freed from Israeli occupation, ending years of deprivation, suffering, attacks, counterattacks, death, misery, fear, uncertainty and tension for all people of this region, Arab and non-Arab.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Serahere (United Republic of Tanzania): Mr. President, thank you for convening this meeting. The United Republic of Tanzania is pleased to see Colombia preside over the Security Council and host deliberations on the situation in the Middle East, in particular the question of Palestine. We commend the commitment and efficiency with which you are leading the deliberations.

The Security Council decided in 1948 to create two States, Palestine and Israel, co-existing in peace in some part of the Middle East. However, politics, group interests and individual acrimony eventually led to the disintegration of the United Nations arrangement. The Cold War served only to exacerbate the situation.

Since 1948, a lot of statements have been made in the Council urging it to rectify the situation, to no avail. Must we continue talking endlessly as if no one is listening? The situation in the Middle East situation and question of Palestine were created by human beings, using the Security Council. The issues can also be solved by human beings using the same Council or any other means of their choice at their disposal.

We cannot afford to say that the Security Council has failed to solve the Palestinian question. We are all aware that discontent causes conflict and that conflict has by-products that we cannot always predict and which we do not always like. In any conflict, the parties involved lose property and lives. Let us therefore think not only of war and conquest; let us also think of making durable peace and go for it.

The Quartet elaborated a Road Map that would lead to a two-State solution of Palestine and Israel living with each other in peace. I believe that the Council has not failed to pursue this option. Let the Security Council pledge to us and vow that, at its next meeting, it will tell us about results, and not about work in progress.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Goledzinowski (Australia): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the work you are doing as President of the Council, including chairing this debate, which comes at a critical juncture.

The region has undergone some dramatic changes since the last Council debate on the situation in the Middle East (see S/PV.6484). As events show dramatically, the people of the region have made it clear that their aspirations are to greater political, social and economic opportunities and that they must be addressed.

But in the face of these regional tectonic shifts, one crucial issue — the peace process — has stalled. Australia has consistently supported a just and enduring peace based on a negotiated two-State solution, allowing Israel and a future Palestinian State to live side by side in peace and security. There is a now an urgency to achieving progress towards peace — an urgency that our Government conveyed to Israeli and Palestinian leaders during our Foreign Minister's visits to the region in December 2010 and again in March 2011, and in regular conversations since then.

Australia continues to urge all sides to exercise maximum restraint, avoid all civilian casualties and return to negotiations as soon as possible. If these steps are not taken and credible progress towards peace not made, there is a real risk that the surge in violence we saw in March will be repeated, with unacceptable civilian casualties on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

Australia is deeply concerned at this recent surge in violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories, including rocket attacks on southern Israel by militants in Gaza and the killing of civilians in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem. Violence undermines the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Above all, all of us must condemn terrorism in all its forms; there can never be justification for the wilful killing of innocent civilians through such brutal acts.

As a strong supporter of Palestinian State-building efforts, Australia welcomes the remarkable progress made by Prime Minister Fayyad and the Palestinian Authority since 2009 in building the institutions necessary for Statehood. It is clear that this institution-building must be matched by political progress towards peace — political progress involving both sides, negotiating directly on final status issues. In this context, both sides must refrain from actions which undermine confidence and the prospects for achieving peace, including the construction of illegal settlements. Settlements undermine the prospects for achieving peace and compromise the future of a two-State solution. They should stop.

Australia also remains concerned at the humanitarian situation, particularly in Gaza. We continue to welcome the relaxation of some Israeli restrictions on access to and from Gaza and recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns. However, the restrictions remain a barrier to peace. Gaza does not need ad hoc assistance measures, even if well-intentioned; it needs predictable and adequate flows of goods and materials. The United Nations will continue to have a critical role to play in addressing the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza.

In conclusion, the changes in the wider region underline the urgency of achieving progress towards peace. Australia calls upon Israelis and Palestinians alike to recognize that it is in their mutual interest to return to direct negotiations so that a just and enduring peace can finally be realized.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Shaanika (Namibia): I join other representatives in thanking Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the Middle East. Namibia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Let me at the outset reaffirm Namibia's unequivocal and unwavering support for and solidarity with the people of Palestine in their quest to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Namibia believes that the right to self-determination is a fundamental human right and that the international community is duty-bound, in accordance with its legal and political obligations, to assist the Palestinian people to achieve this right as soon as possible. Namibia was once an occupied territory. Its people know too well the harsh reality of living under occupation. We wish to see the people of Palestine emerge from the chains of oppression just as we emerged from them 21 years ago.

This year began with dramatic events in the Middle East, marked by the democratic aspirations and demand for freedom, justice and human rights. The situation in Palestine is even more urgent. However, Israel's unlawful construction of settlements and its demolition of Palestinian homes and property, including the historic Shepherd Hotel, continue to undermine efforts to return to the path to peace, increase tensions and further destabilize the situation on the ground, which is yet another attempt by the occupying Power to overshadow international goodwill towards the people of Palestine.

Namibia believes that the construction and expansion of illegal settlements and the erection of walls of separation and annexation are serious impediments to peace and obstacles to the realization of the two-State solution. The illegal construction of Israeli settlements in and around East Jerusalem in particular is nothing but an attempt to alter the legal status of the city and its physical, demographic and cultural character. They must cease. We call on Israel, as the occupying Power, to stop these provocative activities, which are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace.

Israelis are entitled to live in peace and security, which must be acknowledged. However, the pursuit of security by Israel should not create insecurity for other people in the region, in particular not for civilian populations.

We continue to witness the ongoing deplorable Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, which is a clear punishment of the entire population of Palestine. The hardship and misery being imposed on Gaza is morally unjustifiable and unacceptable by any human standard. The blockade must be lifted immediately and the human rights of the population respected.

The Security Council must take appropriate measures and demonstrate its resolve to protect the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territories in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, should not cherry-pick, acting as a matter of expediency at times, while ignoring the plight of a people who have been dispossessed of everything, including human dignity, for more than 60 years. Furthermore, the Council should not fail to discharge its responsibility to protect the civilian population as part of its commitment to maintain international peace and security and its duty to implement its resolutions relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israel and Palestine must resume negotiations to build confidence, which is a clear and necessary step to build a harmonious future. The international community must not shy away from its responsibility to help the people of Palestine, who have been yearning for freedom for more than 60 years. The time for the international community to act is now. It must garner the necessary political will to act with consistency to uphold international law, the Charter of the United Nations and all relevant Security Council resolutions, with which all States Members of the United Nations, including Israel, are bound to comply.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Namibia's full support for Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's plan to end the occupation of Palestine and achieve the independence of the State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security. We call on the Security Council to demonstrate effective leadership and support for that plan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Ordorica (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, as many other speakers have done, to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe for his briefing, as well as the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements this morning.

For decades, the international community has been witness to wars, tensions and violence in the Middle East, often with no means to act, hoping that this conflict would one day come to a definitive end and give way to the peaceful coexistence of nations. Today, no efforts have been spared in pursuit of that goal. The United Nations and a number of States, both within and beyond the region, have become directly involved in this complex task. Nonetheless, the conflict continues, and the goal that would provide for its definitive solution — the establishment of a sovereign, independent and economically and politically viable Palestinian State, coexisting peacefully with Israel within secure, internationally recognized borders — has not been achieved.

Dialogue and negotiation must continue and produce tangible results for Palestinians and Israelis. The status quo is not an alternative, as it will only exacerbate tensions and lead to further violence and confrontation, directly affecting the civilian population and destabilizing the region, especially given the current unrest there. We therefore reiterate our concern at the continuing stalemate in the negotiations between the parties, which has weakened the prospects for peace being achieved in the short and medium term.

During my country's recent term as an elected member of the Security Council, we actively supported efforts aimed at achieving peace in the region and promoting greater involvement on the part of the Council in seeking a lasting solution to this issue. In 20 monthly debates and a number of emergency meetings in 2009 and 2010, we witnessed and participated in the efforts of the Council to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

We remain convinced that the Security Council needs to assume greater responsibility and continue to do everything within its power to re-establish trust and bring about a resumption of substantive negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. For example, with the adoption, against all expectations, of resolution 1860 (2009), we were able to call for a definitive ceasefire in Gaza and for the opening of border crossings to guarantee access for humanitarian aid. Similarly, in June 2010, the Security Council was able to speak in a single voice to condemn the clashes during the attack on the humanitarian flotilla and request an investigation of the facts. The Security Council also came together to establish the parameters for a definitive peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, as shown by the adoption of the presidential statement of 11 May 2009 (S/PRST/2009/14).

Nonetheless, in spite the priority that the Security Council attaches to the resolution of this conflict, those efforts did not have a substantive impact on the ground. In Gaza, resolution 1860 (2009) has not been fully implemented, and the situation seems to have returned to as it was before the military intervention. Rocket attacks have resumed and the humanitarian situation of the residents of the Gaza Strip deteriorates every day, despite the partial opening of the border crossings.

As we have stated since January 2009, we believe that the best way forward, taking Israel's legitimate security concerns into consideration, is to establish an international monitoring mechanism to ensure that the ceasefire is upheld, border crossings fully opened and the illicit trafficking of arms into Gaza effectively controlled, pursuant to resolution 1860 (2009).

Israeli settlements continue to expand in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as do the corresponding evictions and demolitions. We view such settlement expansion and the demolition of Palestinian homes in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, as a serious obstacle to the peace process, contrary to international law and detrimental to the viability of a Palestinian State. We therefore call on Israel to cease these activities immediately in order to give the peace process a real chance.

Regarding the current situation and the recent upsurge in violence, my country condemns all acts of violence, including those promoted by extremist religious elements in the Israeli settlements, and the provocations by Palestinian groups. Such acts only fuel further escalation in the violence. We also urge the parties to refrain from any actions or statements that may lead to incidents of violence and stress that those responsible be punished in accordance with the law.

After a brief resumption resulting from the considerable efforts undertaken by the United States Government, it has not been possible to resume direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, despite the fact that they represent the best option for achieving a comprehensive, lasting and mutually acceptable solution that would lead to the establishment of a political and economically viable Palestinian State, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as the Quartet statements of March and September 2010 and February 2011.

We have taken note of the report of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry, on the progress made over the past two years in the implementation the programme of the thirteenth Government of the Palestinian Authority. The Quartet supported that programme, through which the Palestinian Authority is endeavouring to build the institutions necessary for the establishment of a State.

The Mexican delegation would like to express its concern regarding what is documented in Coordinator Serry's report, namely, that the main obstacle to the existence of a Palestinian State being declared is the continuing Israeli occupation and the failure of a negotiation process aimed at resolving the conflict between both parties. We also support his indication that it is of the greatest importance that the parties overcome the current impasse and resume negotiations in order to reach a framework agreement on a permanent status that resolves all the core issues and makes the two-State solution a reality.

We would also like to mention the three other reports that which were presented on 13 April, in Brussels, to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians, on the progress achieved by the Palestinian Authority.

Our assessment of the situation in the Middle East must take into account the situation in the region. We note with concern the increase in inter-communal tensions in Lebanon, which jeopardize the political balance and the coexistence among the various groups that compose Lebanese society. Violations of resolution 1701 (2006) continue, along with daily incursions by Israeli armed forces into Lebanese territory. We call on Israel and Lebanon, as well on as all political actors involved, to comply with the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions and to avoid any belligerent rhetoric, which could lead to an escalation of violence. We trust that a Government will be formed as a result of the consultations being led by Prime Minister Mikati.

I should like to conclude by stating that the time has come for difficult and momentous political decisions to be taken by the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority for the benefit of their own peoples and for the sake of international peace and security. We deem the support of the Security Council and of the international community to be of the utmost importance in achieving that objective.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela once again pays tribute to our brother country Colombia on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council.

We welcome the briefing by Mr. Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and we endorse the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The demolition of houses and the continuing retaliatory measures carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, are illegal acts that pose major obstacles to the achievement of peace in the region. Those actions are aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and configuration of Palestinian territory, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council and other United Nations resolutions.

We regret that the draft resolution on the illegality of Israeli settlement construction was not adopted, even though it enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of States. The United Nations and the Security Council must take the measures necessary for the State of Israel to comply with the resolutions that promote the creation of two States living side by side within peaceful, secure and recognized borders. Our country reaffirms the need for Israel to fully respect the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories.

Venezuela appreciates the fact that, over the past few months, a growing number of countries have recognized Palestine as a free and independent State. This constitutes a major contribution to the peace process in the Middle East.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip remains serious owing to the sustained and brutal blockade by the State of Israel. Venezuela demands once again the immediate and unconditional lifting of this illegal and unilateral measure.

Venezuela calls on the State of Israel to respect the sovereignty of Lebanon and avert further conflicts such as that which took place in July 2006. Only through direct negotiations between the parties, as established by resolution 1701 (2006), can constructive solutions be reached.

Venezuela also reiterates the need for Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan, in keeping with resolution 498 (1981) and in compliance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

As several members of the Council have brought up the topic of Libya in this forum, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to reiterate its concern regarding resolution 1973 (2011), which has led to military aggression against that country. If some members of the Council exceed their legal powers and decide of their own accord to redefine international law, the United Nations loses its raison d'être.

I would recall that representatives of 14 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia submitted, on 31 March, a communiqué to the President of the Security Council for the month of March, the Permanent Representative of China, in which we asked this body to work closely with countries and organizations in the region and take urgent measures leading to an immediate ceasefire and a peaceful and sustainable solution reflecting the will of the Libyan people.

What action has been taken by the Security Council to implement the ceasefire and seek peace? What measures are being taken to prevent the military occupation of Libya? The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela opts for peace in the world. That is why President Hugo Chávez Frías has called for the creation of impartial international bodies aimed at promoting dialogue among Libyans and leading to a lasting, sustainable peace.

Allow me to conclude by stating that it is imperative that the military aggression by Israel against the Palestinian people cease, and that an immediate end be put to Jewish settlements in the region. As stated by our President, the only way to achieve peace is by way of justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Jomaa (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to congratulate the Colombian delegation on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish you every success in your work, Sir. We would like also to thank the friendly delegation of China for the outstanding manner in which it presided over the Security Council last month. We would also like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing this morning.

My delegation supports the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement.

The negotiation process has now been at a standstill for seven months, despite efforts by a great number of parties to see them resumed. Many had hoped to see the end of this long conflict within the present year through the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

Once again, the established goals have been compromised by the situation on the ground, which is characterized by the intransigence of Israeli policies that flagrantly contravene international conventions and go against the negotiating process. That process must be based on trust, good faith and the will to seriously address the issues that determine the fate of a people that has been deprived of its most fundamental rights and suffered the consequences of war and unrest for many years.

The occupying Power, Israel, continues its acts of colonization instead of promoting peace, despite the international consensus as to the illegal nature of such settlements. This complicates the situation and jeopardizes the chances for achieving peace through the two-State solution.

We are all aware of the fact that this colonization reduces the size of the territory that has historically been Palestinian and which is subject to negotiation, thus affecting one of the most important elements of a final settlement. Moreover, the expulsion of Palestinian residents, the confiscation of their land and the demolition of homes and eviction of their owners are all in complete contravention of the relevant legal norms, and the Fourth Geneva Convention in particular, on which the Council has drawn in adopting a great many resolutions that have been decisive with regard to the settlements and the illegal acts perpetrated by the occupying Power, Israel, against the people of Palestine over many decades.

I would like to recall that more than 30 years ago, in March 1980, when Tunisia was a non-permanent member, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 465 (1980). In so doing, the Council adopted a clear and sincere position on the colonization, and the international community has to this day referred to that resolution. However, there has been no real change on the ground and no respect has been shown for international law by this State Member of the United Nations.

Tunisia views the Palestinian question as a matter of national interest. We have always seen it as a priority and consistently and robustly supported our Palestinian brothers. Theirs is a just and legitimate struggle for sovereignty, freedom and dignity.

Tunisia is proud of its glorious revolution of 14 January 2011, a revolution of dignity and freedom. We reassert our commitment to international law and our support for just causes throughout the world, first and foremost the Palestinian question. We reaffirmed our support to President Mahmoud Abbas when he visited our country from 18 to 20 April during his discussions with various leaders. This position was reaffirmed by the people of Tunisia on many occasions throughout and at the culmination of our revolution.

Tunisia calls for the occupying Power, Israel, to bring an immediate end to its settlement activities and to respect its commitments under international law, international humanitarian law, the Road Map and the peace process. Tunisia calls on all parties concerned, and in particular the international Quartet, to assume their responsibilities to respond to the intransigent Israeli position of refusing to respect international law and do what is needed to achieve a just peace.

We reject all measures aimed at altering the religious, demographic and social identity of Jerusalem. We thoroughly reject attacks on the holy sites, arbitrary expulsions and the separation of families. We condemn Israel's continued perpetration of such acts and call on the international community to adopt a strong position in order to put an end to these actions and to prevent the imposition of a status quo.

The situation in Gaza, as has been said by many people on many occasions, will only lead to greater unrest. The latest acts of aggression against Palestinian civilians underscore the danger of a new cycle of violence, which would further increase the suffering of the Palestinian people, whose wounds have not yet healed following the aggression against Gaza of December 2008 and January 2009.

Tunisia reiterates its position in support of international protection for the Palestinian people. We affirm the need for the occupying Power to respect its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. We caution against any acts of violence, which would only detract from peace efforts and destroy any hope for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

With regard to the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, Tunisia reaffirms that comprehensive and just peace with Israel can be achieved only through Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories to the line of 4 June 1967, including East Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and the territory still occupied in southern Lebanon.

The establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in keeping with the Arab Peace Initiative, is important for the realization of a fair solution to this issue based on the resolutions of the United Nations. The people of the Middle East have suffered far too long. We must bring the occupation of Arab lands to an end in order to promote the security and stability of the region. The security of the region is linked to the security and stability of the whole world. Indeed, global security is linked to security in the Middle East.

We must not allow a return to tension, confrontation and attacks against civilians. To prevent such a scenario, we must adopt urgent, decisive measures to address the underlying causes of these tensions.

Given the extremely sensitive circumstances at present, there is greater need than ever for us to save the peace process so as to meet the aspirations of the peoples of the region and support the just cause of the right of the Palestinian people to freedom, dignity and an independent State, on the basis of international will.

We call on all parties to go beyond mere rhetoric and to undertake courageous initiatives that show sincere and robust will to jointly assume the historic responsibility to bring an end to this long-standing and bitter conflict, which has taken a heavy toll on the region in terms of both property and human life. This conflict has deprived the people of the region of stability and development and forced them to live in constant fear.

Despite this situation, those who are calling for peace, dialogue, negotiations, a settlement of the conflict, and security and lasting peace in the region remain strong in their hope for a change on the ground leading to the two-State solution and an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian-Arab territory. We must support their voices.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I appreciate your efforts during your presidency of the Security Council this month and I thank you for convening this meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

I align myself with the statements delivered by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the representative of Tajikistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I also thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing and stress the importance of the role of the Secretariat in accurately reporting the facts on the ground in the occupied Arab territories and the impact of the prolonged Israeli occupation on stability not only in the Middle East but around the world. I also welcome the participation of Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, and of Mr. Abdou Diallo, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in this meeting.

The world has recently borne witness to the radical position of the Israeli Government, which has shirked its internationally agreed obligations and brought the peace negotiations to a deadlock while remaining immune to accountability. Such behaviour thwarts the efforts of the Council to send a clear signal to Israel that the world can no longer accept the continuation of illegal settlements and the occupation of Arab territories since 1967. Especially in light of the current turmoil in the Arab world, it is mistaken to believe that the flexibility of Arab States and the efforts of the Quartet and the Secretary-General will continue forever. Unfortunately, the Israeli Government persists in its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan, in defiance of the demands of the Quartet, the Committee of Ministers for the Arab Peace Initiative, and the two-thirds of the members of the international community that stand ready to recognize the Palestinian State.

There is an international consensus today in favour of the two-State solution of Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace. We must take advantage of this consensus and momentum to avoid a regional confrontation that is not unlikely to erupt in the present circumstances. The leaders of Israel ought to take this danger seriously.

The position of Arab and peace-loving States is in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council. The establishment of a lasting, just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East can be based only on the principle of land for peace and international legality.

We reiterate our firm rejection of the illegal measures taken by Israel in occupied East Jerusalem and its attempts to change the Arab identity, demographic composition, legal status and religious character of the city, and we stress that all such attempts are null and void and without effect. The international community must reject the attempts of the Israeli Government to undermine the Islamic and Christian holy sites, demolish houses in the city, expel Arab residents and revoke their residency rights with the aim of Judaizing the city. Such attempts violate the obligations of Israel, the occupying Power, under international law, are inconsistent with the relevant decisions of the United Nations, and undermine the foundations of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

While the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory continues, we note ongoing Israeli violations of airspace and espionage activities, which pose a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and violate resolution 1701 (2006). Israel also continues to occupy the Syrian Golan Heights and deplete its wealth. It has scaled up its settlement policy there alongside its policy in Palestine, expelling Arabs and demolishing their homes in an attempt to change the identity and structure of the occupied territory, in contempt of basic human rights and in violation of international law. We reaffirm here the decisions of the General Assembly, which has declared invalid the Israeli decision to annex the Golan and affirmed the need to return it to Syria, in implementation of resolution 497 (1981). We also reaffirm the need for the remaining occupied Lebanese territories to be returned to Lebanon and for the right of the Lebanese to defend their territory to be recognized.

I recall that this Council has the responsibility to achieve peace in the Middle East; that is particularly true of the five permanent members, which have a historic and political responsibility vis-à-vis the current situation. The solution exists, provided that there is political will to create conditions conducive to the establishment and viability of an independent Palestinian State and the recognition of its borders based on those of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. In conclusion, I recall that the right to struggle for liberation from foreign occupation is a legitimate right that cannot be equated with military aggression by occupation forces.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Maldives.

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): Let me begin by expressing our profound appreciation for the opportunity to address the Security Council during this important debate on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

It is with great concern that we note the ongoing violence in the Middle East. While we applaud the international community in its implementation of resolution 1973 (2011) in Libya, my Government feels that more needs to be done in the Middle East to preserve the basic and fundamental rights of the region's populations and to end the ongoing violence.

The Maldives, as a State member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), strongly believes that peace and prosperity in the Middle East can be achieved only by empowering the people to bring in much-needed social, economic and political reforms that would lead to a more democratic and representative system of Government. In our own experience, the suppression of human rights and basic freedoms is hugely counterproductive and eventually leads to the disintegration of societal norms. We urge the international community, especially the members of the League of Arab States and the OIC, to assist their fellow member States going through similar periods of transition in building the institutional infrastructure necessary to complete the transition to a system of governance that is best defined by their respective peoples.

On the question of Palestine, the position of my Government is well known. We are hugely disappointed to note the continued suffering of the Palestinian people. They have been denied their rights to self-determination and to live in peace and freedom in their own independent State for far too long. While recognizing the rights of the Palestinians, we also appreciate and support the right of the people of Israel to live in peace and security alongside an independent and sovereign State of Palestine.

The Israeli settlement is another issue of concern. The Maldives recognizes the Israeli right to housing, but at the same time the rights of Palestinians should not be trampled. Therefore the Maldives calls on Israel to freeze the expansion of all settlements in the occupied territories.

In conclusion, the Maldives does not wish to see another generation of Palestinians grow up under the yoke established by the occupation and the blockade, which perpetuates the extreme poverty and depravity witnessed over the past 63 years. We urge all countries to support the pillars that will provide an enduring solution to the conflict for the people of this region. Violence will never bring peace to the Middle East; instead it will create more violence, shed more blood and increase hatred on both sides. My Government therefore strongly believes that peace will be established in the Middle East only when a sovereign State of Palestine is formed.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. The issue under discussion is of paramount importance, and this meeting is all the more important in the light of new developments taking place in the region.

The Israeli regime continues to defy international law by continuing its unlawful and inhuman blockade against Palestinians, in particular in the Gaza strip, while the damages inflicted on Gaza as a result of the occupying regime's 2009 onslaught are yet to be remedied. The report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48) constitutes an important step in remedying the violations of the Israeli regime in Gaza. When it was issued, the report raised hopes that action would be taken by the relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Security Council, to put an end to the culture of impunity for Israeli war crimes.

However, no credible action has been taken to that end. Attempts are still being made to whitewash the atrocities committed by the Israeli war machine. What would remain of the credibility of the United Nations if no action were taken on the report? United Nations bodies, including the Council, should ensure the full and immediate implementation of the recommendations contained in the Goldstone report. Impunity for perpetrators of crimes of a grave nature is in itself a cause and incentive for further atrocities. In that regard, we welcome the efforts by the Government of Switzerland, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva

Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to reconvene the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to consider measures to enforce the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territory. We hope that the Conference can be held before September.

We also look forward to a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Fact-Finding Mission by all concerned parties, including United Nations bodies and, in particular, the Security Council.

It is regrettable to witness that inaction by relevant United Nations organs in dealing with the Israeli regime's unlawful and inhuman policies and oppressive practices against the populations of the occupied territories has emboldened this dangerous regime to continue its crimes against the defenceless Palestinian people. The generous support by certain Powers for the Israeli regime has been some of the most consequential support in contemporary history. That support has been provided to the detriment of regional peace and stability, as well as Palestinians' basic human rights. Last February, the Council again failed to take action on a draft resolution (S/2011/24) that simply underlined the urgency of putting an end to the Israeli apartheid regime's unlawful campaign to destroy Palestinian homes and build new settlement units (see S/PV.6484).

The draft resolution was doomed to failure simply because just one permanent member resorted to its privileged veto right and obstructed the Security Council from action. That was of course not the first time, as the United States has a long recorded history of covering up the atrocities committed by the Israeli regime, and hence sharing the regime's crimes as an accomplice. Blocking actions by the Council will only embolden the Israeli regime to continue its inhuman and war-mongering policies with impunity and to violate internationally recognized human rights and humanitarian law without any consequences.

The Israeli regime has persisted in its aggressive policies towards Lebanon by constantly violating its land, sea and air space and refusing to withdraw from Lebanese occupied territory. It also refuses to withdraw from the Golan Heights. This regime is continuing its hostile and provocative policy of spying against Lebanon. Recently, sophisticated spying equipment was detected and confiscated — the second such incident in less than a year. This is a blatant violation of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Achieving a peaceful and just settlement of the question of Palestine is imperative for the realization of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond. In our view, lasting peace in Palestine and the region will be possible only through justice and putting an end to discriminatory and racist policies and ending the occupation of Palestine and other occupied territories. Today, we see more and more States joining the ranks of those that have already recognized Palestine as an independent State. This is a very clear indication that the cause of Palestine is taking on new momentum. Let us hope that oppression and occupation will end and justice and freedom will prevail in the Palestinian occupied territory.

Before I conclude, I would like to react to the reference made to my country by the representatives of the United States and the Israeli regime. I would like to place on record that my delegation rejects the baseless allegations and distortions made in the Chamber, which are intended to distract the attention of the international community from the facts concerning the criminal policies and abhorrent atrocities in the region committed by the Israeli regime, in particular the heinous crimes committed against the people of Palestine.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

United Nations **S/PV.6521**

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6521st meeting

Thursday, 21 April 2011, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Alzate	(Colombia)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Vukašinović
	Brazil	Mr. Fernandes
	China	Mr. Sun Xiaobo
	France	Mr. Bonne
	Gabon	Mrs. Ntyam-Ehya
	Germany	Mr. Tillmann
	India	Mr. Kumar
	Lebanon	Mr. Khachab
	Nigeria	Mr. Edokpa
	Portugal	Ms. Cortes Palma
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Govender
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Kinyon

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2011/239, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan; and document S/2011/244, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

After consultations among Council members, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf the Council:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The Security Council reaffirms its support for the continued negotiations between the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), including under the auspices of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) and its Chair, President Thabo Mbeki.
>
> "Noting that the conclusion of the CPA interim period on 9 July is soon approaching, the Council urges the parties, meeting at the highest level, as necessary, to reach agreement on outstanding CPA issues and post-CPA arrangements. The Council also encourages the parties to engage with the United Nations on the future of the United Nations presence in the Sudan.
>
> "The Security Council reiterates its deep concern over increased tensions, violence and displacement in the Abyei Area. The Council calls on both parties to implement and adhere to recent security agreements by withdrawing from the Abyei Area all forces other than the Joint Integrated Units and Joint Integrated Police Units allowed under those agreements, and to urgently reach an agreement on Abyei's post-CPA status. The Council affirms that it is the responsibility of the CPA parties, including during their negotiations under the auspices of AUHIP and its Chair, President Thabo Mbeki, to reach agreement on the status of Abyei. In this regard, the Council acknowledges the July 2009 ruling by The Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration, which defines the borders of Abyei.
>
> "The Security Council welcomes the start of the popular consultation process in Blue Nile State and the rescheduled 2 to 4 May gubernatorial and state assembly elections in Southern Kordofan state. The Council expresses its concern about recent violence in Southern Kordofan and underscores the responsibility of all parties to avoid inflammatory rhetoric and to ensure peaceful and credible elections. The Council also stresses the importance of inclusive, timely and credible popular consultation processes, in accordance with the CPA. The Council urges both parties to reach a security agreement regarding the future of the tens of thousands of troops from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) from Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The Council also urges the parties to reach agreement on security arrangements and to determine the future status of Southerners currently serving in the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).
>
> "The Security Council is deeply concerned about recent violence between the SPLA and local militias, specifically in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states. The Council calls on the leaders of the Government of Southern Sudan and the SPLA to find peaceful solutions to the violence, prevent further clashes and restore calm.
>
> "The Council underlines the need for the CPA parties to promote calm, including by providing immediate and ongoing reassurance to people of all nationalities in the Sudan, including Southerners in the North and Northerners in the South, that their rights, safety and property will be respected. The Council urges the CPA parties to respect their obligations in this regard.
>
> "The Council reiterates in the strongest terms that any obstruction to freedom of movement of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) is unacceptable and that UNMIS requires full and unfettered access throughout the mission area.
>
> "The Security Council will not tolerate any support to proxy militias by either party to the CPA.
>
> "The Security Council reiterates its deep concern over the serious increase in violence and insecurity in Darfur, including ceasefire violations, restrictions on access to vulnerable populations throughout Darfur by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the humanitarian community, attacks by rebel groups, aerial bombardment by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the ongoing displacement of civilians. The Council expresses its deep condolences to the family of the peacekeeper killed on 5 April and urges UNAMID and the Government of the Sudan to conduct a full and thorough investigation into the incident.
>
> "The Security Council reaffirms its support for UNAMID, including the increasingly full implementation of its Chapter VII mandate to deliver its core tasks of protecting civilians and assuring humanitarian access, as defined in resolution 1769 (2007), and recalls the priority given to its efforts in support of the African Union-United Nations-led political process for Darfur. The Council demands that the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements cease hostilities and ensure full and unhindered access, by land and by air, for UNAMID throughout the mission area, and allow humanitarian workers to provide assistance to all populations in need. The Council notes the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations Security Council on 20 April that his Government would issue all outstanding 1,117 visas for UNAMID personnel, and urgently calls on the Government of Sudan to do so.
>
> "The Security Council reaffirms its support for the African Union-United Nations-led peace process for Darfur, hosted by the State of Qatar, and the work of Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassolé. The Council further reaffirms its support for the principles guiding the negotiations. The Council strongly urges all other rebel movements to join the peace process without further delay or preconditions. The Council urges the parties in Doha to make the necessary concessions to quickly reach a ceasefire and political agreement, and looks forward to the outcome of the upcoming All-Darfur Stakeholders' Conference in Doha. The Council believes that this Conference should be fully representative of all of Darfur's populations and interest groups. The Council reiterates the importance of the increased participation of women in the Sudanese peace processes.
>
> "The Security Council recognizes the potential complementary role that a Darfur-based Political Process (DPP) could play in ensuring the participation and support of the people of Darfur and better enabling them to be involved in the implementation of the outcome of the Doha peace process. The Council is nonetheless concerned that important aspects of the enabling environment necessary for a DPP are not in place, including, first, the civil and political rights of participants such that they can exercise their views without fear of retribution; secondly, freedom of speech and assembly to permit open consultations; thirdly, freedom of movement of participants and UNAMID; fourthly, proportional participation among Darfurians; fifthly, freedom from harassment, arbitrary arrest and intimidation; and, sixthly, freedom from interference by the Government or armed movements. The Council calls on the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements to contribute to the creation of such an enabling environment for a DPP, working closely with UNAMID as appropriate, and in particular calls on the Government of the Sudan to fulfil its stated commitment to lift the state of emergency in Darfur.
>
> "The Council also calls on the Government of the Sudan to release all political detainees, to allow free expression and to undertake effective efforts to ensure accountability for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by whomsoever perpetrated."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2011/8.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.6522

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6522nd meeting

Wednesday, 27 April 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Osorio	(Colombia)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mr. Fernandes
	China	Mr. Yang Tao
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	India	Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Khachab
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2011/239)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

11-31274 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2011/239)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. David Buom Choat, Political, United Nations, Congressional Affairs Officer of the Government of Southern Sudan, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2011/267, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America. I wish also to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/239, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

In favour:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1978 (2011).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.